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THE KING'S POETS

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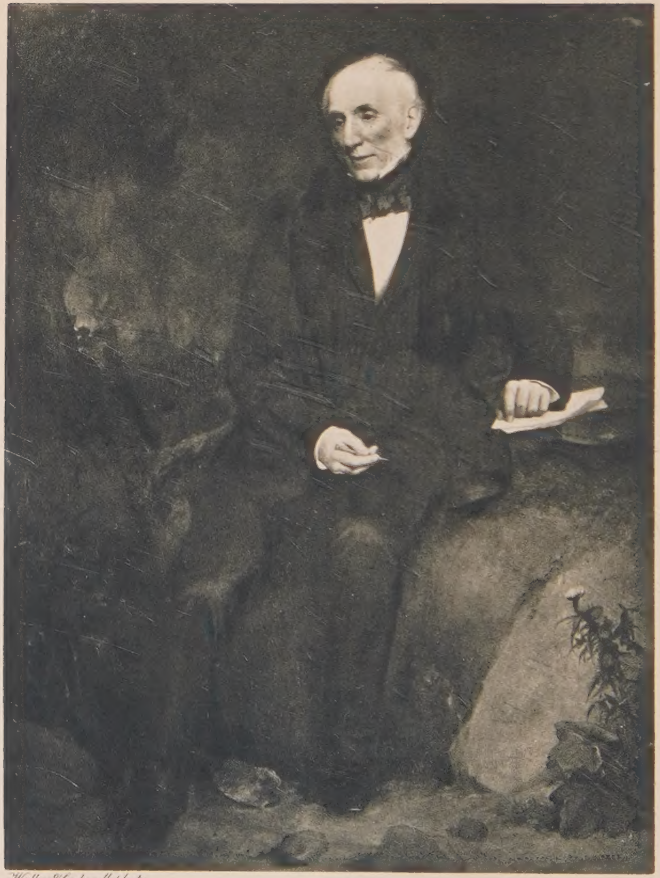
THE PRELUDE BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH



Walker & Cockerell, photo.

William Wordsworth.

From a painting by Henry William Pickersgill, R.A. in the National Portrait Gallery.

THE PRELUDE BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH EDITED WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTION BY BASIL WORSFOLD

ALEXANDER MORING LIMITED
THE DE LA MORE PRESS 298
REGENT STREET LONDON W 1904

Yes, mighty Poet, we have read thy lines,
And felt our hearts the better for the reading,
A friendly spirit, from thy soul proceeding,
Unites our souls: the light from thee that shines
Like the first break of morn, dissolves, combines
All creatures with a living flood of beauty.
For thou hast proved that purest joy is duty,
And love a Fondling, that the trunk entwines
Of sternest fortitude. Oh, what must be
Thy glory here, and what the huge reward
In that blest region of thy poesy?
For long as man exists, immortal Bard,
Friends, husbands, wives, in sadness or in glee,
Shall love each other more for loving thee.

Hartley Coleridge.

INTRODUCTION

Birth and early life.—John Wordsworth, the father of the poet, was an attorney at Cockermouth, in Cumberland. In 1766 he was appointed agent to Sir J. Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale, and in the same year he married Anne, daughter of William Cookson, mercer, of Penrith. Of the five children of the marriage—Richard, William, Dorothy, John and Christopher—William Wordsworth, the second son, was born at Cockermouth on April 7, 1770.

In 1778 Wordsworth lost his mother, and in the same year he was sent to the Grammar School at Hawkshead, in Lancashire, where he boarded in the cottage of his dame, Anne Tyson. He remained at Hawkshead until he was seventeen years of age. In the meantime, on December 30, 1783, John Wordsworth, the father, had died, and Wordsworth, with his brothers and sister, had been placed under the charge of his two uncles, Richard Wordsworth and

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Christopher Crackanthorpe (formerly Cookson). As the father's estate consisted almost exclusively of professional charges which Lord Lonsdale refused to recognize—these claims were ultimately discharged on Lord Lonsdale's death, in 1802, by payment of a sum of £8500 to John Wordsworth's representatives—Wordsworth and his brothers were henceforth indebted to their guardians for the assistance which enabled them to equip themselves for their several careers. Richard, the eldest son, adopted his father's profession, and settled in London. John became a sailor. Wordsworth had already given proof of an unusual capacity by the verses which he had written at Hawkshead; and funds were "scraped together" by the kindly and conscientious guardians to send him and his brother, Christopher, to Cambridge. This generosity and foresight was amply rewarded. Christopher, afterwards distinguished for his Greek scholarship, became Master of Trinity College, and Wordsworth, however disappointing the immediate results of his University career may have been both to himself and his guardians, would not have been the Wordsworth of English literature, if his Cambridge associates and traditions had never entered into his life. To put it bluntly, it was his Cambridge degree which

alone enabled him to preserve his mental integrity under the deluge of hostile criticism in which both his personality and his writings were so long submerged. Dorothy, the devoted sister who afterwards formed an important element in the *vie intime* of the poet, found a home with her grandparents at Penrith.

Wordsworth at Cambridge.—Wordsworth commenced to reside at St. John's in the October term of 1787. Bare and jejune as is this record of the early facts of his life, it is sufficient to reveal the primary influences that went to mould his character. A native of the English Lakeland, motherless at eight, orphaned of both parents at thirteen, with the looser control of guardianship thus early substituted for a parent's authority, the boy Wordsworth divided among his companions, his relatives, and the silent hills, the affection which in other children is concentrated upon the home. He gives in a feebler form to his dame, Anne Tyson, the boyish love which he would have given to a mother ; in his youth he looks to inanimate nature for the assured sympathy and support that he would have had a right to claim from a father. Aloof by habit, self-dependent by circumstance, ill-equipped by his school training with the

precise kind of knowledge required for academic success, the north-country youth of seventeen was an incongruous figure in the undergraduate society of that period. He was as much inferior to his associates in the small change of intellectual converse as he was superior to them in native ability. He withdrew from a contest for academic honours in which he felt that he was bound to be worsted by men whom he regarded as his intellectual inferiors. At the same time his native good sense prevented him from altogether neglecting those opportunities for enlarging his social experience which this society provided. His acquaintance with France, and with the French society and thought of the period of the Great Revolution—an influence of the highest importance in his intellectual development—was the direct outcome of his Cambridge life. In the long vacation of 1790 he joined a fellow undergraduate of his own college, Robert Jones of Plas-yn-llan, Denbighshire, afterwards a Fellow of St. John's, in a walking-tour on the Continent. At this time the "grand tour" was a recognized element in the education of Englishmen in the higher ranks of society; but it may be questioned whether Wordsworth would have found an opportunity of accomplishing this object with the

slender means at his disposal, if an undergraduate friendship had not provided him with a companion whose circumstances and tastes were not unlike his own. "We went staff in hand," he writes, "without knapsacks, and carrying each his needments tied up in a pocket-handkerchief, with about £20 apiece in our pockets." That is not the style in which the "grand tour" was performed; and it needed the dignity and resource of the University tradition to make these scanty preparations sufficient for the end in view. As it was, Wordsworth was enabled to see the spectacle of a France vibrating with the first throbs of the Great Revolution, and to feed his senses in Italy and Switzerland with manifestations of nature rarer and more magnificent than any that his own mountain home had taught him to expect.

Wordsworth had crossed from Dover to Calais on July 13, 1790. In the following January he took an ordinary B.A. degree, and left Cambridge. The question of his future career was still undecided. The University had proved to be an avenue to a larger world of thought and experience, but nothing more. The poetic faculty had remained almost fallow. The two poems which belong to this period, 'An Evening

Walk' and 'Descriptive Sketches,' have nothing to do with Cambridge or Cambridge life. On the other hand, no rival interest had occupied his mind. The one profession for which he was directly equipped by his University degree, was the Church ; but he shrank instinctively from taking any decisive step which would restrict the freedom of his mental growth ; and in any case he knew that he could not take Orders until he was twenty-three. Whether he felt himself already destined for the sacred service of Poetry or not, he availed himself of the "little space of intermediate time" to graze at large, like a victim in the temple precinct, untouched by the yoke of common servitude.

Wordsworth in France.—The greater part of the year 1791 was spent in London ; but his residence there was broken by visits to relatives and friends, and in particular by a walking-tour with Robert Jones through the mountains of North Wales. In the meanwhile the drama now being enacted in France had stirred his imagination with an irresistible appeal ; and in November he crossed the Channel once more—this time alone. A year spent in France in the full current of the Revolution gave Wordsworth an experience that any poet might have envied.

From Orléans, where he had found a pleasant resting-place on the banks of the Loire, he passed on to Blois, then as now a military centre of considerable importance. Here he made the acquaintance of General Michel Beaupuy, one of the many officers stationed in the town. Although allied by birth and profession with the Royalist cause, Beaupuy was a convinced Republican. But he was more than this. Gay, unselfish, and accomplished, this gallant soldier had brought to the service of the people a mind in which the best traditions of the old French chivalry had been preserved.

> "He through the events
> Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
> As through a book, an old romance, or tale
> Of Fairy."[1]

Intercourse with such a mind, and at such a time, was an education of which Wordsworth was eager to avail himself; and his early sympathy with the social principles which underlay the revolutionary movement in France was confirmed by this association with Beaupuy. On his journey out to Orléans he had stayed in Paris :—

[1] 'Prelude,' ix. 300.

> "Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
> Of the Bastille, I sate in the open sun,
> And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
> And pocketed the relic in the guise
> Of an enthusiast."[1]

In October 1792 he returned to find a Paris whose streets were still moist with the blood of the September massacres. The change had come. The monarch was in prison; the people were masters; the Republic was in being.

> "The fear gone by
> Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
> I thought of those September massacres
> Divided from me by one little month,
> Saw them and touched."[2]

Even so he would have remained in the doomed city; for he seems to have entertained the wild thought that he could have obtained some influence with the Republican leaders, and thus inspired a moderating force sufficient to check the carnival of passion. Happily his money was soon exhausted; and in December he obeyed perforce the peremptory summons of his guardians to return at once to England. The fact that Wordsworth preserved his

[1] 'Prelude,' ix. 67. [2] *Ibid.* x. 71.

early sympathy with the Republican movement in France for so many years after the excesses of the Reign of Terror, must be referred in part at least to his connection with Michel Beaupuy, the patriot soldier, from whose lips he had heard the Revolution identified with the cause of the people.

A period of indecision and failure.—Once more returned to England, Wordsworth was confronted with the imperious necessity of doing something to obtain a livelihood. He seems to have hoped that he would be able to support himself by his pen. Early in 1793 'An Evening Walk' and 'Descriptive Sketches,' his first serious efforts in verse, were published; and later in the year he wrote a revolutionary tract in which he advocated the "Rights of Man." The volume of verse won the approbation of Coleridge, but was otherwise unsuccessful in attracting attention. In order to find more remunerative employment Wordsworth proposed in the following year (1794) to establish a monthly periodical, which was to be called the *Philanthropist;* and when this plan had failed, he was driven to fall back upon contributions to the London journals. Happily relief came to him, as to the hero of the 'Æneid,' from an unexpected quarter.

The Raisley Calvert legacy.—In the summer of 1793 Wordsworth had stayed for a time in the Isle of Wight with a friend, William Calvert (a son of Robert Calvert, agent to the Duke of Norfolk). In the following year he made an excursion to the Lake District in company with his sister Dorothy, who was then living at Halifax, in Yorkshire; and later on he stayed with Raisley Calvert, the invalid brother of his friend, at Penrith. Wordsworth's kindness to a comparative stranger, his evident ability and his pecuniary embarrassment, made a deep impression upon the mind of the sufferer; and when shortly afterwards Raisley Calvert died of consumption, it was found that he had made a bequest of £900 in favour of his poet-friend. Except for this bequest Wordsworth would have been compelled to take Orders, or adopt his brother's profession—the Law. As it was, a happy chance and the generous appreciation of a dying man provided him with the freedom and leisure indispensable for the cultivation of his art.

Wordsworth and Coleridge.—In the autumn of 1795 Wordsworth established himself, with his devoted sister, Dorothy, in a farmhouse at Racedown on the borders of Somerset and Dorset. Their

income of "at least £70 to £80 a year" was sufficient for their simple needs, and in the winter he was at work upon the rejected tragedy, 'The Borderers.' Wordsworth's choice of a home in the west of England brought a new and powerful influence into his life. This influence was the close and enduring friendship of Coleridge. He appears to have first met Coleridge, possibly at Bristol, in 1795. In the following year an acquaintance was formed between the two poets; and in 1797, after Coleridge, then living at Nether Stowey in Somersetshire, had paid a visit to Wordsworth at Racedown, this acquaintance developed into so close an intimacy, that the Wordsworths removed in July to Alfoxden, three miles from Nether Stowey. It is interesting to note the characteristic expressions in which the appearance of the two poets at this early period are recorded. Of Coleridge, Wordsworth himself writes that he was a "noticeable man, with large grey eyes"; adding, however, that he appeared "depressed by weight of musing fantasy." By Hazlitt—who with Charles Lamb then first appeared in the poet's circle of acquaintance—Wordsworth is described in 1798 as "a gaunt, quaintly dressed being, not unlike his own Peter Bell"; who, however, in spite of his worn

appearance, talked "very naturally and freely," and could enjoy a "Cheshire cheese." Dorothy Wordsworth completed the intimacy of the two poets. "We are three people," Coleridge wrote, "but only one soul."

It was in this atmosphere of close personal intercourse that the doubtful experiment of a partnership in poetry was projected and carried into effect. In the course of a November afternoon walk in 1797 'The Ancient Mariner' was commenced in collaboration. This method as applied to a single poem was subsequently abandoned; but in the following May the joint volume of *Lyrical Ballads* was produced, and sold to Cottle, the Bristol publisher, for twenty guineas. It consisted of twenty-three pieces, of which Coleridge contributed 'The Ancient Mariner' and two others, and Wordsworth the remaining twenty. It was published in September 1798.

Wordsworth in Germany.—In the same month the Wordsworths and Coleridge left England to visit Germany. At Hamburg, where they had seen Klopstock, the two poets separated. While Coleridge went to Ratzeburg, Wordsworth and his sister settled at Goslar, in Hanover, at the foot of the mountains clothed by the Hartz forest. Words-

worth's genius had rapidly matured under the genial sun of Coleridge's friendship :—

> "O capacious Soul !
> Placed on this earth to love and understand,
> And from thy presence shed the light of love." [1]

And here in Germany some of his finest verse—finest, that is, in pure poetic quality—was written. Among these pieces is that commencing,

> "Three years she grew in sun and shower,"

which is characterized especially by the quality of "charm." [2] Where else has the changing expression on a young girl's face been caught so surely, and rendered with so subtle an effect ?

> "The stars of midnight shall be dear
> To her ; and she shall lean her ear
> In many a secret place
> Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
> *And beauty born of murmuring sound*
> *Shall pass into her face.*"

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[1] 'Prelude,' xiv. 278.

[2] Charm in art is the beauty of suggested movement. It is an aspect of the beautiful which poetry can render more successfully than painting. In sculpture the play of light and shade materially assists the suggestion of movement which the artist can give to an otherwise motionless figure, or group of figures : *g.* in the reliefs of the Parthenon frieze.

It is another manner, but the same art as Homer's,

> Οὐ νέμεσις Τρῶας καὶ ἐϋκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς
> Τοιῇδ' ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν·
> αἰνῶς ἀθανάτῃσι θεῇς εἰς ὦπα ἔοικεν.[1]

It was here, too, that 'The Prelude' began to take form in Wordsworth's mind; and on February 10, 1799, he "poured out a glad preamble" to the poem, as he left Goslar on his way to pay a visit to Coleridge.

Wordsworth in the Lake District.—In the April following Wordsworth returned to England, and in December in the same year (1799) he returned to his "native regions" and settled at Dove Cottage, Grasmere. In 1807 he removed again to Allan Bank, Easedale, and finally settled in 1813 at Rydal Mount, near Grasmere, which remained his home up to the time of his death in 1850. Thus, with the exception of the winter of 1806–7 (which he passed in Leicestershire in a farmhouse lent by his friend Sir George Beaumont), he made his permanent home for the last fifty years of his life among his

[1] In order to indicate the supreme beauty of Helen, Homer represents the oldest and gravest councillors of Troy as saying, when they see her: "No wonder that the Trojans and well-greaved Achæans suffer evils so long a time for such a woman. She is terribly like the deathless goddesses to look upon."

native mountains, in the English Lakeland with which his poetry is so closely associated. Coleridge followed Wordsworth to the Lakes, and settled at Keswick in July 1800 : and at the end of this year a second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, which contained additional poems with a critical essay on the method of poetry—termed 'Observations'—was published in two volumes. A further edition in which the essay was enlarged, and an appendix on 'Poetic Diction' was added, was published in 1802, and these two editions brought Wordsworth £100 from Messrs. Longmans.

His Marriage.—In 1802 the first Lord Lonsdale died, and of the £8500 then paid to the Wordsworth family, under the circumstances already mentioned, some £2000 came to Wordsworth himself. With this addition to his resources he felt justified in marrying, and on October 4, in the same year, Mary Hutchinson of Penrith, the schoolmate of his childhood and companion of his youth, became his wife. To Wordsworth and his wife five children were born. Many well-known passages in Wordsworth's poetry reflect the grace of her person and the beauty of her character ; but none are more beautiful in their sincerity than these :—

"A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food."[1]

'The Prelude.'—In October of the following year Coleridge fell ill, when he was staying with the Wordsworths at Grasmere. For the complete restoration of his health he was advised to go to the south of Europe, and as a means to this end Wordsworth insisted upon his friend's receiving from him a loan of £100. It was under these circumstances that Coleridge left England for Malta on April 9, 1804. In the meantime Wordsworth had been at work upon 'The Prelude.' On March 11, 1798, while he was still in Somerset, he had written in a letter to a friend: "I have been tolerably industrious within the last few weeks. I have written 706 lines of a poem which I hope to make of considerable utility. Its title will be, The Recluse, or Views of Nature, Man, and Society." 'The Recluse,' he tells us in the preface to 'The Excursion' (published in 1814), was to consist of three parts. Of these, the second, or "intermediate" part—'The Excursion'—was alone published. But after thus commencing 'The Recluse'

[1] "She was a phantom of delight."

in 1798, Wordsworth decided to "take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such an employment." This introspective process gave birth to 'The Prelude' —an autobiographical study, the scope and purpose of which is stated with precision in the same preface. "As subsidiary to this preparation, [the Author] undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them."

The actual "preamble" to 'The Prelude' was composed, as already mentioned, in February 1799. The work was finished in the summer of 1805. The greater part of it was forwarded to Coleridge—the "dear friend" to whom it was addressed—while he was at Malta. After Coleridge had returned to England, the entire poem was recited to him by Wordsworth; and the impression which it produced upon him is recorded in the lines 'To a Gentleman, Composed on the night after his recitation of a poem on the growth of an individual mind,' which Coleridge wrote, and subsequently published in his *Sibylline Leaves* (1817). In spite of Coleridge's warm approbation, 'The Prelude' remained unpublished during Wordsworth's lifetime. The first

edition was issued in 1850, a few months after his death.

The origin and character of the poem is sufficiently revealed in these facts and statements. It is a personal, and sometimes an impassioned, appeal to the sympathy of Coleridge, his "heart of hearts." On the one hand, the fine flower and culminating expression of a unique alliance between two rare natures; on the other, it is a psychological record, which, taken in conjunction with his prose essays, constitutes a contribution of permanent importance to the literature of criticism.

The story of Wordsworth's life up to the period of his marriage has been given with some precision. This comparative fulness of detail is to be referred to the circumstance that the biographical facts so far embodied in this account form, as it were, an indispensable background to 'The Prelude.' But what is essential in the narrative of the poet's subsequent life can be drawn into a narrower space.

Wordsworth and the Critics.—The coldness with which Wordsworth's first volume of poetry was received has been noticed. His second effort, made in conjunction with Coleridge—the *Lyrical Ballads*—

was scarcely more successful. The sale of the first edition, of which only 500 copies had been printed, was so small, that when Cottle sold his business to Messrs. Longman, the value of the copyright was set down as *nil*. It was therefore returned by him to Wordsworth. But the criticism with which the original volume was received was merciful in comparison with the almost universal condemnation which was pronounced upon the contents of the two-volume edition of 1800. Here was a man who not only wrote poetry in what was then believed to be a novel style—although as a matter of fact it was the oldest style of all—but presumed to justify both the matter and the manner of his poetry by critical and philosophic arguments. It was in point of fact the 'Observations' and the essay on 'Poetic Diction' which made the great professional critics dip their pens in gall. In 1807 Wordsworth published two new volumes of verse, containing, among other pieces, the famous ode, 'Intimations of Immortality. . . .' In reference to this poem the *Edinburgh Review* printed the astounding sentence: "Beyond doubt it is the most illegible and unintelligible part of the publication. We can pretend to give no analysis or explanation of it." And the same authority had pronounced

Coleridge's 'Christabel' to be "a mixture of raving and drivelling." Yet so submissive was the reading public of the early nineteenth century to the judgment of the quarterly reviews, that this ignorant abuse was accepted as literary criticism, and for the time being Wordsworth's poetry was practically driven out of the book-market. For eight years no fresh edition of these volumes was required. But Wordsworth had something of the strength and endurance of his native mountains in his character. Something, too, he owed to the race of northern freeholders from whom he was descended. He set himself to analyze the relationship of the poet to the current thought of his age; and he found satisfaction in exhibiting the previous failures of the self-ordained exponents of this thought, when they were confronted by a work of genius—a work, that is, to which, from the conditions of its production, the standards of average excellence cannot be applied. He has gathered up the results of the inquiry, as set out in the 'Essay Supplementary to the Preface' of the 1815 edition of his poems, in a passage in which he re-states an opinion of Coleridge: "If there be one conclusion more forcibly pressed upon us than another by the review which has been given of the

fortunes and fate of poetical works, it is this,—that every author, as far as he is great and at the same time original, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed : so has it been, so will it continue to be. This remark was long since made to me by the philosophical friend, for the separation of whose poems from my own I have previously expressed my regret. The predecessors of an original genius of a high order will have smoothed the way for all that he has in common with them ; and much he will have in common ; but, for what is peculiarly his own, he will be called upon to clear and often to shape his own road :—he will be in the condition of Hannibal among the Alps."

The whole 'Essay Supplementary' is a reasoned and deliberate reply to Jeffrey, who had greeted 'The Excursion,' published in the preceding year, 1814, with the exclamation—"This will never do!"[1] The charge of immorality, brought against Wordsworth by these professional critics, was based upon the fact of the poet's early sympathy with the revolutionary movement in France. The Lake school, it was said, found its inspiration in Rousseau ; and the writings of Wordsworth and other poets of this school

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, Nov. 1814.

were filled with the revolutionary feeling of discontent against the social system of civilized nations. Such a charge was at once the more comprehensible and the more injurious because it came at a period when England was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with France. But painful as these attacks must have been to one who desired "to be considered as a teacher or nothing," Wordsworth retained his confidence in his own genius, and with it an unshaken belief that his countrymen would one day learn to appreciate his work. At the time when the critics were most bitter and most successful, he writes with noble assurance to one of his friends :—"Trouble not yourself about the present reception [of my poems] ; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny ?—to console the afflicted ; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier ; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous ; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform long after we are mouldered in our graves. I am well aware how far it would seem to many I overrate my own exertions when I speak in this way. I am not, however, afraid of such censure. . . . Let the poet first

consult his own heart as I have done, and leave the rest to posterity."

Wordsworth's subsequent life (1805–1850).—But in spite of the open hostility of the literary leaders of the period, and the failure of his poetry to obtain any general recognition, Wordsworth's genius and character brought him more than one influential friend. He made the acquaintance of Scott in 1803, and the two poets found a mutual attraction in their common admiration of nature, which quickly ripened into friendship. Both Lord Lonsdale—to whom he owed his appointment in 1813 to the office of Distributor of Stamps for the county of Westmoreland, which carried a salary of some £400 a year—and Sir George Beaumont—who claimed the Elizabethan dramatist of that name as an ancestor—showed a generous and discriminating appreciation of his poetic work, together with much personal kindness. His long estrangement from Coleridge, which darkened the lives of both for so many years, was finally removed in 1817. And at length, even as he had foreseen, the long frost of public neglect and misapprehension suddenly broke up. On February 20, 1835, he had told Moore, that his receipts on all his works then published had not amounted

to more than £1000. A year later Mr. Edward Moxon paid him this amount—£1000—for the right of publishing a new edition of his poems. The appreciation of the many was followed by the recognition of the few. In 1838 he received the degree of D.C.L. from the northern University of Durham, and in the following year the like honour was conferred upon him by Oxford. In 1842 he gave up the position of Stamp Distributor, and in October he was assigned a pension of £300 a year—due to the representations of Mr. Gladstone—from the government of Sir Robert Peel. In the following year Southey, his friend, died, and he accepted the office of poet-laureate.[1] With this English crown of poets' laurel—in his case no meaningless sign of the nation's choice—upon his brow, Wordsworth died at Rydal Mount, on April 23, 1850.

'The Prelude' and 'The Excursion.'—In a letter written to Wordsworth on May 30, 1815,[2] Coleridge explains the reason of the disappointment which he had expressed at the character of 'The Excursion.'

[1] In 1844 Lord Jeffrey, in publishing a volume of his *Edinburgh Review* articles, made a tardy acknowledgment of the (now) poet-laureate's merit.

[2] *Letters of S. T. Coleridge:* Edited by E. Hartley Coleridge, 1895.

He says, ". . . *comparatively* with the *former* poem [the then unpublished 'Prelude'] 'The Excursion,' as far as it was new to me, had disappointed my expectations." Then he continues, "I had expected that the poem on the growth of your mind was as the ground plot and the roots, out of which 'The Recluse' was to have sprung up as the tree; as far as [there was] the same sap in both, I expected them, doubtless, to have formed one complete whole; but in matter, form, and product to be different, each not only a distinct but a different work. In the first I had found 'themes by thee first sung aright.' . . . Indeed, through the whole of that poem, *με Αὔρα τις εἰσέπνευσε μουσικωτάτη*.[1] This I considered as 'The Excursion,' and the second as 'The Recluse.' . . ." He then adds, that the work which he expected was to be a great philosophic poem; it was to have the "passion" of poetry, the "arrangement" of philosophy, and "the unity (beginning, middle and end) of a poem." Whatever its length, it was to be "a

[1] "A breath of purest poetry was wafted to my soul." The omitted passage contains the lines from "Of smiles spontaneous . . ." to "An orphic song indeed. A song divine of high and passionate thoughts To their own music chaunted," from the poem which he (Coleridge) composed on hearing 'The Prelude' recited. See p. 373.

determinate length," and of the subjects treated, each was to have "its appointed place, and, excluding repetitions, each would relieve and rise in interest above the other."

It is obvious that 'The Excursion' by itself does not satisfy this standard of poetic composition. Nor is it easy to see how the first and third parts of 'The Recluse,' if they had been written and published, could have formed with 'The Excursion' a poem possessed of the essential unity of a work of art. Coleridge's criticism is just. 'The Excursion' has neither unity in itself, nor is it so framed as to form a constituent part in any greater scheme of poetic composition. But while 'The Excursion' depends for its merit upon detached passages, whether of description, reflection, or incident, 'The Prelude' does possess that unity of subject and treatment which allows the mind of the reader to receive from it some one definite and complete impression. In this, at least, 'The Prelude' is a finer production than 'The Excursion,' although in other respects it closely resembles it. Other writers have told the story of their early years—of their struggles and their hopes; but in Wordsworth's case we have the story conveyed by the proper method of art, and the story of the growth of a poet's mind, as

he tells it, awakens in us that "intimate sense of things" which only poetry can give.

Wordsworth's Thought.—The central aim of Wordsworth's poetry is reflected in the introductory lines to 'The Excursion.' These lines, he tells us, are taken from the conclusion of the first book of 'The Recluse,' and may be accepted as a "kind of prospectus of the design and scope" of the entire poem so named.

"On man, on nature, and on human life
Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
Accompanied by feelings of delight,
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
And dear remembrances whose presence soothes
Or elevates the mind, intent to weigh
The good and evil of our mortal state.
To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,
Whether from breath of outward circumstance,
Or from the soul—an impulse to herself,
I would give utterance in numerous verse.
Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love, and hope—
And melancholy fear subdued by faith;
Of blessed consolations in distress;
Of moral strength, and intellectual power;
Of joy in widest commonalty spread;
Of the individual mind that keeps her own

> Inviolate retirement, subject there
> To conscience only, the law supreme
> Of that Intelligence which governs all ;
> I sing—'fit audience let me find though few.'"

The interpretation of the facts of life, which is here announced, is implicitly connected with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul ; and for his belief in this doctrine Wordsworth depends upon two main propositions : *Life has come from Life*, and *Man has kinship with Nature*.

There is an element in man the origin of which cannot be traced to the reports of the external world conveyed to him by the senses. Its origin is to be looked for in a period antecedent to birth.

> "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar :
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, Who is our home :
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy !"[1]

Out of this element there arises a "faculty of the soul" which is superior to the exigences of mortal

[1] Ode on 'Intimations of Immortality. . . .'

existence. As the moon by her "unconsuming fire of light" incorporates the landscape into her own substance, so by virtue of this power the obstacles, material and spiritual, which man encounters are made contributry to the growth and splendour of the soul.

Wordsworth and Nature.—On the other hand, it is through the senses that man perceives his kinship with nature. The link between man and the world of nature is God, whom Wordsworth conceives of as the conscious energy that sets in motion all the processes of organic and inorganic matter. The principle that controls man's actions, say the "conscience," is identical (as being derived from God) with the principle that controls nature, or the material world external to man. But in the case of man the passions interfere with the dictates of conscience; in the case of nature, however, there is no such interference. Therefore it is in nature that man can find an example and a revelation. Let man go to nature for guidance and consolation. Let science explain and expound the workings of nature; that is to help man to read his duty and his destiny more clearly.

This view—to which the circumstances of his early

life had predisposed him—was elicited and confirmed by Wordsworth's experience. His disappointment at the results of the Revolution in France, his own failure to earn a livelihood by literature in London, his narrow means, the coldness of the general public and the active hostility of the leaders of literary thought—all tended to drive him back to the society of inanimate Nature. In her he found his "best and purest friend";

> "From her receives
> That energy by which he seeks the truth,
> From her that happy stillness of the mind
> Which fits him to receive it when unsought."[1]

In Nature he found not only consolation and strength, but the direct poetic impulse which gives his work its special significance and value as a contribution to English literature.

> "Above all
> Were re-established now those watchful thoughts
> Which, seeing little worthy or sublime
> In what the Historian's pen so much delights
> To blazon—power and energy detached
> From moral purpose—early tutored me
> To look with feelings of fraternal love
> *Upon the unassuming things that hold*
> *A silent station in this beauteous world.*"[2]

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[1] 'Prelude,' xiii. 7. [2] *Ibid.* 39.

Moreover, it is in man thus seen in closest association with Nature that the "universal heart" of humanity is developed and revealed.

"I felt that the array
Of act and circumstance, and visible form,
Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind
What passion makes them ; that meanwhile the forms
Of Nature have a passion in themselves,
That intermingles with those works of man
To which she summons him ; although the works
Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own ;
And that the Genius of the Poet hence
May boldly take his way among mankind
Wherever Nature leads ; that he hath stood
By Nature's side among the men of old,
And so shall stand for ever." [1]

Thus placed in true perspective the heart of man is seen to be good. The real man is happy on earth ; and when he sinks to the tomb, faith, not despair, is his companion. And so Wordsworth becomes a "prophet of Nature."

"We to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith : what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how ;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes

[1] 'Prelude,' xiii. 287.

A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine."[1]

Wordsworth's revolt from Eighteenth-Century thought.—The condition of mind in which Wordsworth begins his serious and deliberate work as a prophet of Nature is described at length in the concluding books of 'The Prelude.' It is a personal renaissance. He had allowed his mind to be dominated by the theories of life and art embodied in the literature of the eighteenth century, and his poetic energy to be regulated by the current opinion of contemporary leaders of thought in England. The insufficiency of these social and political theories has been demonstrated by the excesses and inconsistencies of the Republican leaders in France. The falseness of the existing standards of literary and poetic achievement has been proved by the test of practical experience. From these books and opinions he returns to the primary sources of knowledge provided by sensation, *i. e.* by his own individual intercourse with man and nature. The knowledge thus obtained at first hand

[1] 'Prelude,' xiv. 446.

furnishes him with results which he can harmonize with a belief in the progress of man, and the moral significance of the world of nature. His poetic method and the technique of his compositions in verse exhibit the effect of this change in his mental attitude towards the facts of life. In both he recoils from the conventional treatment and artificial style of eighteenth-century poetry to a simple diction and a natural, or realistic, presentation of character and action. To this he adds a field of observation hitherto unrepresented in poetry. The processes of the human mind, and the processes of nature as manifestations of the divine mind, are treated, both separately and in conjunction with each other, as subjective realities; and as such he regards them as capable of being expressed in the terms of an art which is, in his own phrase, "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." It is in particular by a comparison of the processes of nature with the moods of the human mind that Wordsworth has provided a new and illuminating interpretation of mental phases which, though they are in themselves obscure, are yet pregnant with suggestions of the highest psychological significance. To these suggestions he has given poetic expression; and the "torch of life" which fell

from his hand has burnt still more brightly in the hand of Browning, his natural successor in this region of poetic thought.

His theory of Poetry.—Wordsworth has been at some pains to define his position, and to explain in what respects his conception of poetry differs from that current at the time. In the 'Observations' prefixed to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (published in 1800), he writes:

"The principal object which I proposed to myself in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by man, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature, chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement." He tells us further that each of these poems has a purpose, and that this purpose, previously described as "to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excite-

ment," may be more correctly expressed as being "to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature."

His Poetic Style.—To this account of the "subjects and aim" of his poems he adds certain special characteristics of his poetic style.

"The reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and I hope, are utterly rejected, as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. I have proposed to myself to intimate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of man; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but I have endeavoured utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style, or as a family language which writers in metre seem to lay claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep my reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. I am, however, well aware that others who follow a different track may interest him likewise; I do not interfere with their claim, I only wish to

prefer a different claim of my own. There will also be found in these pieces little of what is usually called poetic diction ; I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it ; this I have done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men, and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart, is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. I do not know how, without being culpably particular, I can give my reader a more exact notion of the style in which I wished these poems to be written, than by informing him that I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject, consequently I hope that there is in these poems little falsehood of description, and that my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something I must have gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely, good sense ; but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech, which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many ex-

pressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad poets, till 'such feelings of disgust' are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower."

His theory of Poetic Diction.—On the subject of "poetic diction" he has written with more precision in the Appendix to the same volume. He there assigns the following origin to the artificial language which had come to be associated with poetry.

"The earliest poets of all nations generally wrote from passion excited by real events; they wrote naturally, and as men; feeling powerfully as they did, their language was daring, and figurative. In succeeding times, poets, and men ambitious of the fame of poets, perceiving the influence of such language, and desirous of producing the same effect without having the same animating passion, set themselves to a mechanical adoption of these figures of speech, and made use of them, sometimes with propriety, but much more frequently applied them to feelings and ideas with which they had no natural connexion whatsoever. A language was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the real language of men in any situation."

His conception of Poetry.—Having thus defined the subjects, aim, and style of his poetry, he proceeds to show that poems so composed will satisfy the highest conception of poetry as an art.

"The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude; the poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science. Emphatically may it be said of the poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, 'that he looks before and after.' He is the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an

atmosphere of sensations in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man."

The nature of the Poet.—And of the method of poetry he writes :

"The sum of what I have said is, that the poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected ? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these ; with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe ; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and objects which the poet describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects which interest them. The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of the passions of men. How, then,

can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly?"

Wordsworth and Sensation.—The poet "moves his wings in an atmosphere of sensation." He describes "sensations and objects." It will be observed how high a significance Wordsworth attaches to sensation as a subject of poetic representation. Now this estimate of the place which sensation holds as a medium for the revelation of cosmic truths involves an apparent inconsistency. Poetry was to Wordsworth "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." But the reports of the senses are admittedly deficient in exactness, sometimes actually misleading; and the insufficiency of knowledge based solely upon the testimony of the senses is a common proposition of philosophy. How comes it, then, that Wordsworth, who in the fine words of M. Legouis "strove to the utmost that his verse should owe its beauty to the soul alone,"[1] thus insists upon the value of sensation? How is it that he makes sensation not only the medium in which the clearest manifestations of man and nature are to be seen, but the medium

[1] *La Jeunesse de William Wordsworth*, 1770-1793—Étude sur 'le Prélude.' Par Émile Legouis. Paris, 1896.

through which the poet feels his way to those very truths to which the support of the senses has been rigorously denied—the "unseen and eternal" things, the vision of which has been hitherto reserved for the eye of faith?

M. Legouis has given his answer to this question in the course of the very interesting account of the relationship of the imagination to the senses (as it was conceived by Wordsworth) which is contained in his 'Étude sur le Prélude.' The "pure and spontaneous language" of the senses, he writes,[1] can be heard now but rarely; it is too frequently robbed of its significance by the action of the reason which obtrudes itself between the mind and the senses under the pretext of correcting and explaining the reports which they bring. Yet even to-day, in spite of an inherited predisposition to check the senses by the reason, we are not absolutely incapable of bringing the "untampered, primary sensations" into operation. A faint manifestation of that "revelation," which was once freely at our disposal, can under favourable conditions, objective and subjective, be obtained from sensation. "No longer does any sound—heard it matters not where, it matters not when—suffice to

[1] *La Jeunesse de William Wordsworth*, 1770–1793, p. 466.

throw the soul into a state of trance (*l'état visionnaire*). But in infancy, in the midst of the fields, a weird cry, like the cuckoo's, can lead us to it."

> "O Cuckoo! shall I call thee bird,
> Or but a wandering voice?
> * * * * *
> Thou bringest unto me a tale
> Of visionary hours." [1]

His use of Ecstasy.—In plain words Wordsworth appeals to the experience of a man in a state of ecstasy; to the mental condition, that is, of St. John on "the isle, that is called Patmos"; [2] to those moments when the sentient being, thus entranced, is brought into connection with the "great soul" of the world. In this supreme manifestation of sense-perception sensation transcends reason; it brings to man a knowledge of a vague something external to himself—a knowledge which cannot reach the mind by

[1] 'To the Cuckoo' (1802).

[2] "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice. . . ." For a modern instance the reader is referred to the vision of the Lama, in the last chapter of Mr. Kipling's *Kim*. "Yea, my soul went free, and wheeling like an eagle, saw indeed that there was no Teshoo Lama nor any other soul. As a drop draws to water, so my soul drew near to the Great Soul which is beyond all things."

the normal avenues of sense as controlled by reason. It is in virtue of this property that Wordsworth assigns to sensation so high a place among the objects of poetic reproduction.

> "The eye—it cannot choose but see ;
> We cannot bid the ear be still ;
> Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
> Against, or with our will.
>
> Nor less I deem that there are powers
> Which of themselves our mind impress ;
> That we can feed this mind of ours
> In a wise passiveness." [1]

The fact that these super-normal states of consciousness have a recognized value as a contribution to the sum of human knowledge is illustrated by a striking passage written by Addison. In an essay dealing with the value of religious observances, he says : "The Devout man does not only believe but feels there is a Deity. He has *actual sensations* of Him ; his Experience concurs with his Reason ; he sees Him more and more in all his Intercourses with Him, and even in this Life almost loses his Faith in Conviction." [2] Now this passage was written in the early part of the eighteenth century ; at the beginning of the nineteenth

[1] 'Expostulation and Reply.'

[2] *Spectator*, 465.

we have Wordsworth finding sources of direct contact between the soul in man and the soul in nature. The opening years of the twentieth century have been marked already by a singular testimony paid by science, in the person of one of its more successful students, to the work of a man whose life was devoted to the investigation of these very super-normal occurrences, on the express assumption that they admit of scientific treatment. In reference to the volumes[1] in which the results of these researches are embodied, Sir Oliver Lodge has said :[2] "It is by the name of Man of Science that I wish to hail our late chief and leader, Frederic Myers."

The value of sensation, therefore, is emphasized by Wordsworth not for the colour and warmth which an appeal to the sensuous element in man can lend to poetic compositions, but for this unique contribution which it affords to our knowledge of what is to him the highest object of the human intelligence. The realism that he sought to obtain from sensation was

[1] *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, by Frederic Myers. It is noteworthy that Myers wrote the volume on Wordsworth in the English Men of Letters Series.

[2] At a meeting of the Psychical Research Society, June 18, 1903.

in effect the witness of the senses to beliefs hitherto held to have been ideal. Wordsworth's conversion of the ideal in literature to the real—his basing a belief in the immortality of the soul upon actual sensations experienced by himself and reported to have been experienced by others—is a step forward in the progress of human consciousness, and a widening of the bounds of human knowledge.[1]

Wordsworth's contribution to English Literature.—It is in this aspect of his poetry that we must look for the "something new," which gives Wordsworth a definite and permanent place in English literature. In writing of his relationship to his great predecessors in the art of poetry, M. Legouis pays a significant tribute to the originality of his

[1] "The products of the subliminal [*i. e.* of the self below the threshold of conscious life, and, therefore, of the senses unguided by reason] are to be regarded as 'higher,' in a definite sense, than those of the supraliminal [*i. e.* of conscious life]. The supraliminal is that which is the outcome of terrestrial evolution, and so is able to manifest itself in a planetary manner; *the subliminal has a cosmic existence*, which may play a part in terrestrial evolution hereafter, but at present only shows signs of doing so, as, for instance, in the super-normal uprushes which are known as the inspirations of genius; signs which may be taken as anticipatory of the course of evolution in the future." Sir Oliver Lodge (*Proceedings of the S. P. R.*, June 1903).

poetic thought. Wordsworth, he says, had succeeded in harmonizing the true and the good, and in beauty he had found the expression of them both. It was his mission to spread a knowledge of his success to the world.

"Poetry had never held so lofty an opinion of herself before. In her most ambitious tasks of the eighteenth century she assumed the modest part of a pleasant and lucid exponent of philosophic ideas to the people. The bold and lofty poets of the Renaissance had remained far removed from the new conception. They had been proud to be the creators of a marvellous world of beauty and virtue, but it had never entered their minds to identify this system of their creation with the solid ground beneath their feet."

Milton believed poetry to be more true than science; but this belief was attained at the cost of a close alliance with religion.

"Wordsworth was enfranchised from all tutelage, whether of philosophy or religion. With no bible but Nature, the poet was for him the *Seer* who holds the rank of supreme master in virtue of his quickened senses, and his unsullied and vigorous imagination. It is to him that is assigned the duty of making men

better and happier by revealing to them their own natures and the universe which they inhabit." [1]

His Realism.—But here somewhat greater precision is necessary. It must not be supposed, as M. Legouis would almost seem to suggest, that Wordsworth, or any other writer of creative literature, could become greater by neglecting to employ the idealizing process of art. Poetry, and every other art, does not represent, or reproduce, the world of reality in the form in which it is perceived by the senses, but the mental aspect of reality. That is to say, the artist first forms a conception which is directly based upon the reports of the senses, and then reproduces this conception—and not the reality reported by the senses—in the medium, and by the method, proper to the art which he employs. In his poem on the Daisy, to take a simple example, Wordsworth does not describe the flower as a botanist would, but he tells us the thoughts and feelings which the sight of it has brought into his mind.

> "Bright flower whose home is everywhere!
> A pilgrim bold in nature's care,
> And all the long year through the heir
> Of joy or sorrow,

[1] *La Jeunesse de William Wordsworth*, p. 487.

> Methinks that there abides in thee
> Some concord with humanity,
> Given to no other flower I see
> The forest through." [1]

Whether it be a simple flower or the most mysterious manifestation of human mind that forms his subject, Wordsworth employs the idealizing process of art in his reproduction of it. The difference in his treatment of those deeper questions to which M. Legouis refers, as compared with that of Milton, is not to be expressed by saying that Wordsworth is a realist, while Milton was an idealist. It lies in the fact that Wordsworth has included in his conception of these questions a body of evidence that Milton had overlooked—or, more correctly, that had not then become the property of the world. But in dealing with this fresh body of evidence, he employed the idealizing process of art just as much as Milton employed it in dealing with the history of Adam and Eve. Where, however, Wordsworth does gain in reality—where he places his feet upon solid ground, to use M. Legouis' expression—is in taking for his subject an element in the life of man which is purely mental. The manifestations of man's

[1] 'Poems of the Fancy.'

spiritual life have—and, as such, can have—no objective counterparts in anything external to the individual man himself. The poetic representation of a state of mind only differs from what is the corresponding reality—namely the same state of mind as known to ourselves—in so far as the poet's mind is more sensitive than our own. Such a representation may—and in the case of minds sufficiently receptive does—produce the reality itself. It is the large space which representations of these states of consciousness, or conditions of mind, hold in his poetic pictures of human life, and the profound importance with which he invests them, that give Wordsworth's poetry its realism, and make him, as Stuart Mill said, the poet of the unpoetical.

Technical Qualities of his Poetry.—As we have already noticed,[1] Wordsworth failed to invest the material in which his philosophic thought was embodied with the unity of construction necessary for a single great poem. His most obvious short-coming—a short-coming which is especially to be observed in 'The Excursion'—is a deficiency of the constructive faculty. In addition to this his poetry, as a whole, displays an extraordinary unevenness of

[1] See p. xxxiv.

execution. He drops from verses of pure poetic quality to passages that, except for their metre, are scarcely distinguishable from prose,—and he does this without any apparent sense of incongruity. His account of Poetic Diction, and his theory of the value and effect of metre as an element in poetic composition, are questionable in themselves; and they led him to overlook what after all is the real difference between poetry and prose, regarded as mere assemblages of word-symbols for the expression of ideas. In prose the half-tones of the author's thought are duly notated and expressed with varying completeness. The words or clauses by which these links of thought are expressed in prose, are omitted in poetry. It is left to the reader to supply their place by the spontaneous action of his own mind. From this characteristic of poetic composition, whether metrical or not in form, there results: (1) a more active co-operation between the mind of the reader and that of the author, and (2) a more rapid presentation of ideas—since the poet's composition hurries us on from one main idea to another, without stopping to give expression to the intervening and ancillary thoughts. In prose, these ancillary thoughts are expressed with more or less of fulness; and thus we

read prose with less mental effort than verse. But, on the other hand, the mind being less actively enlisted, the imagination is less lively, and the simulated emotion or sensation is less keenly experienced.[1]

Now, while Wordsworth realized that the method of poetry, as being the method of art, is distinct from the method of science, and did ample justice to this distinction in his critical essays, he failed to recognize that something more than metre separated the literary vehicle of poetry from that of prose. Possibly he would not have fallen into this error if he had been more familiar with the literary masterpieces of ancient Greece and Rome: for the characteristics of these synthetic languages were such that they admitted—and, indeed, encouraged—a higher development in the literary vehicle of poetry than any to which it has subsequently attained. As it is, we find him, if I may so express myself, trying to write poetry in the style of prose. This was to carry his protest against

[1] If the reader will paraphrase a few lines of verse, he will see for himself how much he must add to make his prose express the condensed meaning of the poetry. In other words, how much poetic composition, whether metrical or not, owes to an artistic arrangement of words which is outside, and independent, of the rules of grammatical composition.

the conventionality of eighteenth-century poetry too far ; and in his desire to make good a position, which was in itself perfectly legitimate, he sacrificed poetic quality to precision. In other words, he invested his poetry with a merit proper to prose, at the risk of depriving it of other merits no less characteristic of poetry : forgetting that this very definiteness of literary expression which constitutes the merit of prose is apt in the artistic environment of poetry to assume the unnecessary and incongruous clearness of a platitude.[1]

This frequent loss of poetic quality removes Wordsworth from the class of the supreme masters of song. On the other hand, the tendency to which it was due impelled him to a deeper significance of thought. If the weight of this thought is sometimes too heavy for its literary vehicle to carry with perfect grace ; if he was unable to build up an epic like Milton ; if he rarely invests his verse with the lyric enthusiasm of Shelley—he gave his poetry as a whole the sustaining fertility of philosophy, the freshness and vigour of original observation, and the tender sincerity of a

[1] To write a platitude is for the author to brusquely reject the assistance of the reader's mind. Undesirable in prose, it is disastrous in poetry ; since here the appeal is made directly to the imagination, not to the reason.

life set four-square with the noblest aspirations of the race. When he is at his best, few wear the poet's robe more royally than he. "Since Milton," Coleridge writes, "I know of no poet with so many felicities and unforgettable lines and stanzas as you." [1] And in truth it was Wordsworth that first among the poets of the nineteenth century fed his torch with the Elizabethan tradition of free art, and illumined a new region in the universe of mind.

> "The outward shows of sky and earth,
> Of hill and valley, he has viewed;
> And impulses of deeper birth
> Have come to him in solitude." [2]

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[1] Letter probably dated 1824 or 1829. *Letters*, etc. (as above).

[2] 'A Poet's Epitaph.'

CHRONOLOGICAL CONSPECTUS.

	WORDSWORTH.	LITERARY AND ARTISTIC.	GENERAL.
1770	April 7 *b.*		
1771	. . . .	Scott *b.*	
1772	. . . .	Coleridge *b.*	
1774	. . . .	Southey *b.*	
1775	. . . .	Turner *b.* . . .	American Revolution.
1778	Mother died : sent to Hawkshead school.		
1783	Father died.	. . . . .	Peace of Versailles (loss of American Colonies, except Canada).
1787	Goes to Cambridge.	. . . . .	Society for Suppression of Slave Trade founded.
1788	Spends vacation at Hawkshead.	Byron *b.* Gainsborough *d.*	
1789	Spends vacation at Penrith (with his sister Dorothy, and his cousin, Mary Hutchinson).	. . . . .	Opening of States General. Destruction of the Bastille (July 14).
1790	Makes tour with Jones, in France and Switzerland.	. . . . .	Louis XVI. swears to observe new constitution (July 14).

1791	Takes his degree (Jan.); goes to France (Nov.).	. . . . .	Louis XVI., etc., arrested (June 21).
1792	At Orléans, Blois, and Paris. Returns to England (Dec.).	Sir J. Reynolds *d.* . Shelley *b.*	First Coalition against France (June). Massacres of Sept. 2nd–6th.
1793	*Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches.* Sympathizes with Republican France.	. . . . .	Louis XVI. beheaded (Jan.). Republican France declares war against England and Holland (Feb. 1).
1794	Unsuccessful efforts to earn a livelihood by literature.	. . . . .	Lord Howe's victory. Robespierre guillotined (July 28).
1795	Raisley Calvert legacy. Settles with Dorothy W. at Racedown, Dorsetshire (Oct.).	Keats *b.* . . .	Louis XVII. dies in prison. The French *Directory* chosen (Nov.).
1796	Intimacy with Coleridge commences.	Coleridge's *Poems on various Subjects.* Southey's *Joan of Arc.*	Buonaparte's campaign in Italy.
1797	Removes to Alfoxden, near Coleridge at Nether Stowey.	. . . . .	Treaty of Campo Formio (conquest of Italy).
1798	*Lyrical Ballads.* Visit to Germany (Goslar).	. . . . .	Buonaparte's Expedition to Egypt. Battle of the Nile.

	WORDSWORTH.	LITERARY AND ARTISTIC.	GENERAL.
1799	'Preamble' to PRELUDE written. Return to England (April). At Sockburn-on-Tees. Settles at Grasmere (Dec. 21).		
1800	Books I. and II. of PRELUDE (probably) written. *Lyrical Ballads* (2nd Ed.).		
1801	. . . . .	. . . . .	Union of Great Britain and Ireland (Jan. 1). Battle of Copenhagen. *Concordat* (July). Peace of Amiens (Oct.).
1802	Marries Mary Hutchinson.	Romney *d.*	
1803	Tour in Scotland: makes acquaintance of Scott.	Southey's *Thalaba*.	War against Buonaparte.
1804	PRELUDE, Books III. to XI. written.	Morland *d.* Coleridge goes to Malta.	Napoleon crowned by the Pope *Empereur des Français*.

1804	. . . . .	. . . . .	Beaconsfield *b.*
1805	PRELUDE completed.	Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel.* Byron goes to Cambridge (Oct.).	Battle of Trafalgar.
1806	At Coleorton, Leicestershire.	Coleridge returns to England.	
1807	New Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, etc.	Byron's *Hours of Idleness.*	Abolition of Slave Trade (British).
1808	. . . . .	. . . . .	Peninsular War (May).
1809	. . . . .	Tennyson *b.* Coleridge publishes *The Friend: a Literary, Moral and Political Journal* (Aug. 1809 to March 1810).	Corunna. Gladstone *b.*
1810	. . . . .	Southey's *Curse of Kehama.* Scott's *Lady of the Lake.*	
1811	. . . . .	Thackeray *b.*	
1812	. . . . .	Byron's *Childe Harold*, etc. (1812–1814). Browning *b.* Dickens *b.*	Luddite Riots (displacement of hand labour by machinery in manufactures).
1813	. . . . .	Southey, Poet Laureate. Shelley's *Queen Mab.*	
1814	The *Excursion* .	Scott's *Waverley* (novels up to 1828).	The Allies enter Paris.

	WORDSWORTH.	LITERARY AND ARTISTIC.	GENERAL.
1815	New Edition of *Poetical Works* (dedicated to Sir George Beaumont: and without Coleridge's poems formerly included).	Copley *c.*	Waterloo.
1816	. . . .	R. B. Sheridan *d.* Coleridge's *Christabel* with *Kubla Khan*, etc.	
1817	. . . .	Coleridge's *Sibylline Leaves; Biographia Literaria.*	
1818	. . . .	Keats' *Endymion.*	
1819	. . . .	. . . . .	Victoria *b.*
1821	. . . .	Keats *d.* Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound.*	
1822	. . . .	Matthew Arnold *b.* Shelley *d.*	
1823	. . . .	Byron's *Don Juan.*	
1824	. . . .	Byron *d.* (Missolonghi).	
1827	. . . .	Holman Hunt *b.* Authorship of Waverley Novels acknowledged by Scott.	Navarino.

1828	. . . .	First collected edition of Coleridge's "Poetical and Dramatic Works." George Meredith *b.* Rossetti (D. G. C.) *b.*	
1829	. . . .	Millais *b.*	Catholic Emancipation.
1830	. . . .	Leighton *b.* Lawrence *d.*	Opening of Liverpool and Manchester Railway.
1832	PRELUDE finally corrected.	Scott *d.*	Reform Bill passed.
1833	. . . . .	Burne-Jones *b.* . .	Abolition of slavery (in British dominions).
1834	. . . .	Coleridge *d.*	
1837	. . . .	Swinburne *b.*	Accession of Queen Victoria.
1838	D.C.L. Oxford. .	Coleridge's *Literary Remains* (1836-38).	
1843	Poet Laureate .	Southey *d.* Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (i).	
1850	Death (April 23).		

ADVERTISEMENT

The following Poem was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the summer of 1805.

The design and occasion of the work are described by the Author in his Preface to the Excursion, first published in 1814, where he thus speaks :—

"Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such an employment.

"As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them.

"That work, addressed to a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the author's intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished ; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it, was a determination to compose a philosophical Poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society, and to be entitled the 'Recluse' ; as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.

"The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the Ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic Church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor pieces, which have been long before the public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive reader to have such connection with the main work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices."

Such was the Author's language in the year 1814.

It will thence be seen, that the present Poem was intended to be introductory to the RECLUSE, and that the RECLUSE, if completed, would have consisted of Three Parts. Of these, the Second Part alone, viz., the EXCURSION, was finished, and given to the world by the Author.

The first Book of the First Part of the RECLUSE still remains in manuscript; but the Third Part was only planned. The materials of which it would have been formed have, however, been incorporated, for the most part, in the Author's other Publications, written subsequently to the EXCURSION.

The Friend, to whom the present Poem is addressed,

was the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was resident in Malta, for the restoration of his health, when the greater part of it was composed.

Mr. Coleridge read a considerable portion of the Poem while he was abroad; and his feelings, on hearing it recited by the Author (after his return to his own country), are recorded in his Verses, addressed to Mr. Wordsworth, which will be found in the "Sibylline Leaves," p. 197, ed. 1817, or "Poetical Works, by S. T. Coleridge," vol. i. p. 206.

Rydal Mount,
July 13th, 1850.

NOTE

The text of *The Prelude* has been set up from the *Editio Princeps* of 1850. The pagination, spelling, and punctuation of the original have (with a few necessary exceptions) been preserved. Mr. Carton's notes will be found quoted among those supplied by the present Editor. Suggested emendations of the text are mentioned in the notes.

Erratum. *At p.* 312, *l.* 423, for '*Etna*' read '*Enna.*'

MAP OF THE
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Buttermere
Skiddaw
Skiddaw Forest
Calva
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Mungrisdale
Penrith
Greystoke
Murrah Park
Motherby
Hutton
Dacre
Sockbridge
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Morland
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Helvellyn
Skiddaw

BOOK I

INTRODUCTION—CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

BOOK FIRST

INTRODUCTION—CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

O THERE is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
Whate'er its mission, the soft breeze can come
To none more grateful than to me; escaped
From the vast city, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale
Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
The earth is all before me. With a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,

I look about; and should the chosen guide
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again!
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me: it is shaken off,
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day
Not mine, and such as were not made for me.
Long months of peace (if such bold word accord
With any promises of human life),
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
Are mine in prospect; whither shall I turn,
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
Upon the river point me out my course?

Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail
But for a gift that consecrates the joy?
For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A correspondent breeze, that gently moved
With quickening virtue, but is now become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation. Thanks to both,
And their congenial powers, that, while they join

In breaking up a long-continued frost,
Bring with them vernal promises, the hope
Of active days urged on by flying hours,—
Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought
Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
Matins and vespers of harmonious verse!

Thus far, O Friend! did I, not used to make
A present joy the matter of a song,
Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains
That would not be forgotten, and are here
Recorded: to the open fields I told
A prophecy: poetic numbers came
Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
A renovated spirit singled out,
Such hope was mine, for holy services.
My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's
Internal echo of the imperfect sound;
To both I listened, drawing from them both
A cheerful confidence in things to come.

Content and not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion, I paced on
With brisk and eager steps; and came, at length,
To a green shady place, where down I sate

Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice,
And settling into gentler happiness.
'Twas autumn, and a clear and placid day,
With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
Two hours declined towards the west ; a day
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove
A perfect stillness. Many were the thoughts
Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
Of a known vale, whither my feet should turn,
Nor rest till they had reached the very door
Of the one cottage which methought I saw.
No picture of mere memory ever looked
So fair ; and while upon the fancied scene
I gazed with growing love, a higher power
Than Fancy gave assurance of some work
Of glory there forthwith to be begun,
Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused,
Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,
Save when, amid the stately grove of oaks,
Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup
Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once
To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound.
From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun
Had almost touched the horizon ; casting then

A backward glance upon the curling cloud
Of city smoke, by distance ruralised ;
Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive,
But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,
Even with the chance equipment of that hour,
The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale.
It was a splendid evening, and my soul
Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked
Æolian visitations ; but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
And lastly utter silence ! "Be it so ;
Why think of any thing but present good ?"
So, like a home-bound labourer I pursued
My way beneath the mellowing sun, that shed
Mild influence ; nor left in me one wish
Again to bend the Sabbath of that time
To a servile yoke. What need of many words ?
A pleasant loitering journey, through three days
Continued, brought me to my hermitage.
I spare to tell of what ensued, the life
In common things—the endless store of things,
Rare, or at least so seeming, every day
Found all about me in one neighbourhood—
The self-congratulation, and, from morn

To night, unbroken cheerfulness serene.
But speedily an earnest longing rose
To brace myself to some determined aim,
Reading or thinking; either to lay up
New stores, or rescue from decay the old
By timely interference: and therewith
Came hopes still higher, that with outward life
I might endue some airy phantasies
That had been floating loose about for years,
And to such beings temperately deal forth
The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
That hope hath been discouraged; welcome light
Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear
And mock me with a sky that ripens not
Into a steady morning: if my mind,
Remembering the bold promise of the past,
Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
Vain is her wish; where'er she turns she finds
Impediments from day to day renewed.

And now it would content me to yield up
Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts
Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend!
The Poet, gentle creature as he is,
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;

His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts: his mind, best pleased
While she as duteous as the mother dove
Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,
But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on
That drive her as in trouble through the groves;
With me is now such passion, to be blamed
No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

When, as becomes a man who would prepare
For such an arduous work, I through myself
Make rigorous inquisition, the report
Is often cheering; for I neither seem
To lack that first great gift, the vital soul,
Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort
Of Elements and Agents, Under-powers,
Subordinate helpers of the living mind:
Nor am I naked of external things,
Forms, images, nor numerous other aids
Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil
And needful to build up a Poet's praise.
Time, place, and manners do I seek, and these
Are found in plenteous store, but nowhere such
As may be singled out with steady choice;

No little band of yet remembered names
Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope
To summon back from lonesome banishment,
And make them dwellers in the hearts of men
Now living, or to live in future years.
Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking
Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,
Will settle on some British theme, some old
Romantic tale by Milton left unsung;
More often turning to some gentle place
Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe
To shepherd swains, or seated harp in hand,
Amid reposing knights by a river side
Or fountain, listen to the grave reports
Of dire enchantments faced and overcome
By the strong mind, and tales of warlike feats,
Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword
Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry
That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife;
Whence inspiration for a song that winds
Through ever changing scenes of votive quest
Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid
To patient courage and unblemished truth,
To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,
And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves.

Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate
How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,
And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
Odin, the Father of a race by whom
Perished the Roman Empire: how the friends
And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain
Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles,
And left their usages, their arts and laws,
To disappear by a slow gradual death,
To dwindle and to perish one by one,
Starved in those narrow bounds: but not the soul
Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years
Survived, and, when the European came
With skill and power that might not be withstood,
Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold
And wasted down by glorious death that race
Of natural heroes: or I would record
How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled man,
Unnamed among the chronicles of kings,
Suffered in silence for Truth's sake: or tell,
How that one Frenchman, through continued force
Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
Of those who conquered first the Indian Isles,
Went single in his ministry across
The Ocean; not to comfort the oppressed,

But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about
Withering the Oppressor : how Gustavus sought
Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines :
How Wallace fought for Scotland ; left the name
Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower,
All over his dear Country ; left the deeds
Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts,
To people the steep rocks and river banks,
Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
Of independence and stern liberty.
Sometimes it suits me better to invent
A tale from my own heart, more near akin
To my own passions and habitual thoughts;
Some variegated story, in the main
Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts
Before the very sun that brightens it,
Mist into air dissolving ! Then a wish,
My best and favourite aspiration, mounts
With yearning toward some philosophic song
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life ;
With meditations passionate from deep
Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre ;
But from this awful burthen I full soon
Take refuge and beguile myself with trust

That mellower years will bring a riper mind
And clearer insight. Thus my days are past
In contradiction ; with no skill to part
Vague longing, haply bred by want of power,
From paramount impulse not to be withstood,
A timorous capacity from prudence,
From circumspection, infinite delay.
Humility and modest awe themselves
Betray me, serving often for a cloak
To a more subtle selfishness ; that now
Locks every function up in blank reserve,
Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye
That with intrusive restlessness beats off
Simplicity and self-presented truth.
Ah ! better far than this, to stray about
Voluptuously through fields and rural walks,
And ask no record of the hours, resigned
To vacant musing, unreproved neglect
Of all things, and deliberate holiday.
Far better never to have heard the name
Of zeal and just ambition, than to live
Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour
Turns recreant to her task ; takes heart again,
Then feels immediately some hollow thought
Hang like an interdict upon her hopes.

This is my lot; for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
Or see of absolute accomplishment
Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself,
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
In listlessness from vain perplexity,
Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
Like a false steward who hath much received
And renders nothing back.
Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou,
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.
When he had left the mountains and received
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers
That yet survive, a shattered monument

Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed
Along the margin of our terrace walk ;
A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
Made one long bathing of a summer's day ;
Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
Of yellow ragwort ; or when rock and hill,
The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport
A naked savage, in the thunder shower.

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear :
Much favoured in my birth-place, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which erelong
We were transplanted—there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped

The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation ;—moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befel
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil
Became my prey ; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
Had in high places built her lodge ; though mean
Our object and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble. Oh ! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock

But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she may use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape

Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn

Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and nature, purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valley made
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us—for me

It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the grassy plain; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side

Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
And Souls of lonely places! can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea?
Not uselessly employed,
Might I pursue this theme through every change,
Of exercise and play, to which the year

Did summon us in his delightful round.

We were a noisy crew ; the sun in heaven
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours ;
Nor saw a band in happiness and joy
Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.
I could record with no reluctant voice
The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers
With milk-white clusters hung ; the rod and line,
True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong
And unreproved enchantment led us on
By rocks and pools shut out from every star,
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
Among the windings hid of mountain brooks.
—Unfading recollections ! at this hour
The heart is almost mine with which I felt,
From some hill-top on sunny afternoons,
The paper kite high among fleecy clouds
Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser ;
Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,
A ministration of your own was yours ;

Can I forget you, being as you were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood? or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which
Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye
Delights and exultations of your own.
Eager and never weary we pursued
Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire
At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate
In square divisions parcelled out and all
With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,
We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head
In strife too humble to be named in verse:
Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,
Cherry or maple, sate in close array,
And to the combat, Loo or Whist, led on
A thick-ribbed army; not, as in the world,
Neglected and ungratefully thrown by
Even for the very service they had wrought,
But husbanded through many a long campaign.
Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
Had changed their functions; some, plebeian cards
Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth,
Had dignified, and called to represent
The persons of departed potentates.

Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!
Ironic diamonds,—clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,
A congregation piteously akin!
Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,
Those sooty knaves, precipitated down
With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven:
The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse,
Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay,
And monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained
By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad
Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth;
And, interrupting oft that eager game,
From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice
The pent-up air, struggling to free itself,
Gave out to meadow grounds and hills a loud
Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main.

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
How Nature by extrinsic passion first
Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,
And made me love them, may I here omit
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin; how I have felt,

Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
An intellectual charm; that calm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first-born affinities that fit
Our new existence to existing things,
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union between life and joy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,
And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
The faces of the moving year, even then
I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
Old as creation, drinking in a pure
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays
Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell
How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,
And to the shepherd's hut on distant hills
Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,
How I have stood, to fancies such as these

A stranger, linking with the spectacle
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
And bringing with me no peculiar sense
Of quietness or peace; yet have I stood,
Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league
Of shining water, gathering as it seemed
Through every hair-breadth in that field of light
New pleasure like a bee among the flowers.

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy
Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits
Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss
Which, like a tempest, works along the blood
And is forgotten; even then I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield;—the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true,
By chance collisions and quaint accidents
(Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed
Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
Collateral objects and appearances,
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
Until maturer seasons called them forth

To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
—And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
Wearied itself out of the memory,
The scenes which were a witness of that joy
Remained in their substantial lineaments
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
Were visible, a daily sight; and thus
By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness,
So frequently repeated, and by force
Of obscure feelings representative
Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
Though yet the day was distant, did become
Habitually dear, and all their forms
And changeful colours by invisible links
Were fastened to the affections.
I began
My story early—not misled, I trust,
By an infirmity of love for days
Disowned by memory—ere the breath of spring
Planting my snowdrops among winter snows:
Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend! so prompt
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out

With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.
Meanwhile, my hope has been, that I might fetch
Invigorating thoughts from former years;
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
May spur me on, in manhood now mature,
To honourable toil. Yet should these hopes
Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was framed
Of him thou lovest; need I dread from thee
Harsh judgments, if the song be loth to quit
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, those lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining?

One end at least hath been attained; my mind
Hath been revived, and if this genial mood
Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down
Through later years the story of my life.
The road lies plain before me;—'tis a theme
Single and of determined bounds: and hence
I choose it rather at this time, than work

Of ampler or more varied argument,
Where I might be discomfited and lost:
And certain hopes are with me, that to thee
This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend!

BOOK II

SCHOOL-TIME—(Continued)

BOOK SECOND

SCHOOL-TIME—(Continued)

Thus far, O Friend! have we, though leaving much
Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace
The simple ways in which my childhood walked;
Those chiefly that first led me to the love
Of rivers, woods, and fields. The passion yet
Was in its birth, sustained as might befal
By nourishment that came unsought; for still
From week to week, from month to month, we lived
A round of tumult. Duly were our games
Prolonged in summer till the day-light failed:
No chair remained before the doors; the bench
And threshold steps were empty; fast asleep
The labourer, and the old man who had sate
A later lingerer; yet the revelry
Continued and the loud uproar: at last,

When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars
Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,
Feverish with weary joints and beating minds.
Ah! is there one who ever has been young,
Nor needs a warning voice to tame the pride
Of intellect and virtue's self-esteem?
One is there, though the wisest and the best
Of all mankind, who covets not at times
Union that cannot be;—who would not give,
If so he might, to duty and to truth
The eagerness of infantine desire?
A tranquillising spirit presses now
On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind,
That, musing on them, often do I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being. A rude mass
Of native rock, left midway in the square
Of our small market village, was the goal
Or centre of these sports; and when, returned
After long absence, thither I repaired,
Gone was the old grey stone, and in its place
A smart Assembly-room usurped the ground
That had been ours. There let the fiddle scream,

And be ye happy! Yet, my Friends! I know
That more than one of you will think with me
Of those soft starry nights, and that old Dame
From whom the stone was named, who there had sate,
And watched her table with its huckster's wares
Assiduous, through the length of sixty years.

We ran a boisterous course; the year span round
With giddy motion. But the time approached
That brought with it a regular desire
For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms
Of Nature were collaterally attached
To every scheme of holiday delight
And every boyish sport, less grateful else
And languidly pursued.
When summer came,
Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays,
To sweep along the plain of Windermere
With rival oars; and the selected bourne
Was now an Island musical with birds
That sang and ceased not; now a Sister Isle
Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown
With lilies of the valley like a field;
And now a third small Island, where survived
In solitude the ruins of a shrine

Once to Our Lady dedicate, and served
Daily with chaunted rites. In such a race
So ended, disappointment could be none,
Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy:
We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,
Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength,
And the vain-glory of superior skill,
Were tempered; thus was gradually produced
A quiet independence of the heart;
And to my Friend who knows me I may add,
Fearless of blame, that hence for future days
Ensued a diffidence and modesty,
And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
The self-sufficing power of Solitude.

Our daily meals were frugal, Sabine fare!
More than we wished we knew the blessing then
Of vigorous hunger—hence corporeal strength
Unsapped by delicate viands; for, exclude
A little weekly stipend, and we lived
Through three divisions of the quartered year
In penniless poverty. But now to school
From the half-yearly holidays returned,
We came with weightier purses, that sufficed
To furnish treats more costly than the Dame

Of the old grey stone, from her scant board, supplied.
Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground,
Or in the woods, or by a river side
Or shady fountains, while among the leaves
Soft airs were stirring, and the mid-day sun
Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy.
Nor is my aim neglected if I tell
How sometimes, in the length of those half-years,
We from our funds drew largely;—proud to curb,
And eager to spur on, the galloping steed;
And with the courteous inn-keeper, whose stud
Supplied our want, we haply might employ
Sly subterfuge, if the adventure's bound
Were distant: some famed temple where of yore
The Druids worshipped, or the antique walls
Of that large abbey, where within the Vale
Of Nightshade, to St. Mary's honour built,
Stands yet a mouldering pile with fractured arch,
Belfry, and images, and living trees,
A holy scene! Along the smooth green turf
Our horses grazed. To more than inland peace
Left by the west wind sweeping overhead
From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers
In that sequestered valley may be seen,
Both silent and both motionless alike;

Such the deep shelter that is there, and such
The safeguard for repose and quietness.

Our steeds remounted and the summons given,
With whip and spur we through the chauntry flew
In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,
And the stone-abbot, and that single wren
Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave
Of the old church, that—though from recent showers
The earth was comfortless, and touched by faint
Internal breezes, sobbings of the place
And respirations, from the roofless walls
The shuddering ivy dripped large drops—yet still
So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird
Sang to herself, that there I could have made
My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there
To hear such music. Through the walls we flew
And down the valley, and, a circuit made
In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth
We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams,
And that still spirit shed from evening air!
Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed
Along the sides of the steep hills, or when
Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea

We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

Midway on long Winander's eastern shore,
Within the crescent of a pleasant bay,
A tavern stood; no homely-featured house,
Primeval like its neighbouring cottages,
But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset
With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within
Decanters, glasses, and the blood-red wine.
In ancient times, and ere the Hall was built
On the large island, had this dwelling been
More worthy of a poet's love, a hut,
Proud of its own bright fire and sycamore shade.
But—though the rhymes were gone that once inscribed
The threshold, and large golden characters,
Spread o'er the spangled sign-board, had dislodged
The old Lion and unsurped his place, in slight
And mockery of the rustic painter's hand—
Yet, to this hour, the spot to me is dear
With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay
Upon a slope surmounted by a plain
Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood
A grove, with gleams of water through the trees
And over the tree-tops; nor did we want
Refreshments, strawberries and mellow cream.

There, while through half an afternoon we played
On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed
Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee
Made all the mountains ring. But, ere night-fall,
When in our pinnace we returned at leisure
Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach
Of some small island steered our course with one,
The Minstrel of the Troop, and left him there,
And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute
Alone upon the rock—oh, then, the calm
And dead still water lay upon my mind
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
Never before so beautiful, sank down
Into my heart, and held me like a dream!
Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus
Daily the common range of visible things
Grew dear to me: already I began
To love the sun; a boy I loved the sun,
Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge
And surety of our earthly life, a light
Which we behold and feel we are alive;
Nor for his bounty to so many worlds—
But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
The western mountain touch his setting orb,

In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess
Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow
For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.
And, from like feelings, humble though intense,
To patriotic and domestic love
Analogous, the moon to me was dear;
For I could dream away my purposes,
Standing to gaze upon her while she hung
Midway between the hills, as if she knew
No other region, but belonged to thee,
Yea, appertained by a peculiar right
To thee and thy grey huts, thou one dear Vale!

Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervenient till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake. But who shall parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
Split like a province into round and square?
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown, even as a seed?
Who that shall point as with a wand and say,
"This portion of the river of my mind

Came from yon fountain?" Thou, my Friend! art one
More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee
Science appears but what in truth she is,
Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
But as a succedaneum, and a prop
To our infirmity. No officious slave
Art thou of that false secondary power
By which we multiply distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
That we perceive, and not that we have made.
To thee, unblinded by these formal arts,
The unity of all hath been revealed,
And thou wilt doubt, with me less aptly skilled
Than many are to range the faculties
In scale and order, class the cabinet
Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase
Run through the history and birth of each
As of a single independent thing.
Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind,
If each most obvious and particular thought,
Not in a mystical and idle sense,
But in the words of Reason deeply weighed,
Hath no beginning.

Blest the infant Babe,
(For with my best conjecture I would trace

Our Being's earthly progress,) blest the Babe,
Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep
Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!
For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature that connect him with the world.
Is there a flower, to which he points with hand
Too weak to gather it, already love
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him
Hath beautified that flower; already shades
Of pity cast from inward tenderness
Do fall around him upon aught that bears
Unsightly marks of violence or harm.
Emphatically such a Being lives,
Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,
An inmate of this active universe.
For feeling has to him imparted power
That through the growing faculties of sense
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
Create, creator and receiver both,

Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds.—Such, verily, is the first
Poetic spirit of our human life,
By uniform control of after years,
In most, abated or suppressed; in some,
Through every change of growth and of decay,
Pre-eminent till death.
From early days,
Beginning not long after that first time
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch
I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart,
I have endeavoured to display the means
Whereby this infant sensibility,
Great birthright of our being, was in me
Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path
More difficult before me; and I fear
That in its broken windings we shall need
The chamois' sinews, and the eagle's wing:
For now a trouble came into my mind
From unknown causes. I was left alone
Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
The props of my affections were removed,
And yet the building stood, as if sustained
By its own spirit! All that I beheld
Was dear, and hence to finer influxes

The mind lay open to a more exact
And close communion. Many are our joys
In youth, but oh! what happiness to live
When every hour brings palpable access
Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
And sorrow is not there! The seasons came,
And every season wheresoe'er I moved
Unfolded transitory qualities,
Which, but for this most watchful power of love,
Had been neglected; left a register
Of permanent relations, else unknown.
Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude
More active even than "best society"—
Society made sweet as solitude
By silent inobtrusive sympathies,
And gentle agitations of the mind
From manifold distinctions, difference
Perceived in things, where, to the unwatchful eye,
No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
Sublimer joy; for I would walk alone,
Under the quiet stars, and at that time
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood, by form
Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,
If the night blackened with a coming storm,

Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power;
And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation: not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectural life; but that the soul,
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, whereto
With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
Have something to pursue.
And not alone,
'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair
And tranquil scenes, that universal power
And fitness in the latent qualities
And essences of things, by which the mind
Is moved with feelings of delight, to me
Came, strengthened with a superadded soul,
A virtue not its own. My morning walks
Were early;—oft before the hours of school
I travelled round our little lake, five miles

Of pleasant wandering. Happy time! more dear
For this, that one was by my side, a Friend,
Then passionately loved; with heart how full
Would he peruse these lines! For many years
Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds
Both silent to each other, at this time
We live as if those hours had never been.
Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
Far earlier, ere one smoke-wreath had risen
From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush
Was audible; and sate among the woods
Alone upon some jutting eminence,
At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude.
How shall I seek the origin? where find
Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt?
Oft in these moments such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in the mind.
'Twere long to tell
What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
And what the summer shade, that day and night,
Evening and morning, sleep and waking, thought

From sources inexhaustible, poured forth
To feed the spirit of religious love
In which I walked with Nature. But let this
Be not forgotten, that I still retained
My first creative sensibility;
That by the regular action of the world
My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power
Abode with me; a forming hand, at times
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;
A local spirit of his own, at war
With general tendency, but, for the most,
Subservient strictly to external things
With which it communed. An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds,
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye:
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
And hence my transport.
Nor should this, perchance,
Pass unrecorded, that I still had loved
The exercise and produce of a toil,
Than analytic industry to me

More pleasing, and whose character I deem
Is more poetic as resembling more
Creative agency. The song would speak
Of that interminable building reared
By observation of affinities
In objects where no brotherhood exists
To passive minds. My seventeenth year was come;
And, whether from this habit rooted now
So deeply in my mind, or from excess
In the great social principle of life
Coercing all things into sympathy,
To unorganic natures were transferred
My own enjoyments; or the power of truth
Coming in revelation, did converse
With things that really are; I, at this time,
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.
Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
From Nature and her overflowing soul,
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye

Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

If this be error, and another faith
Find easier access to the pious mind,
Yet were I grossly destitute of all
Those human sentiments that make this earth
So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
That dwell among the hills where I was born.
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content

With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
With God and Nature communing, removed
From little enmities and low desires,
The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,
This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
If, 'mid indifference and apathy,
And wicked exultation when good men
On every side fall off, we know not how,
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
Of peace and quiet and domestic love,
Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers
On visionary minds; if, in this time
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
Despair not of our nature, but retain
A more than Roman confidence, a faith
That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
The blessing of my life; the gift is yours,
Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,
Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations; and in thee,
For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
A never-failing principle of joy
And purest passion.
Thou, my Friend! wert reared
In the great city, 'mid far other scenes;

But we, by different roads, at length have gained
The self-same bourne. And for this cause to thee
I speak, unapprehensive of contempt,
The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,
And all that silent language which so oft
In conversation between man and man
Blots from the human countenance all trace
Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought
The truth in solitude, and, since the days
That gave thee liberty, full long desired
To serve in Nature's temple, thou hast been
The most assiduous of her ministers;
In many things my brother, chiefly here
In this our deep devotion.

Fare thee well!
Health and the quiet of a healthful mind
Attend thee! seeking oft the haunts of men,
And yet more often living with thyself,
And for thyself, so haply shall thy days
Be many, and a blessing to mankind.

BOOK III

RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

BOOK THIRD

RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

It was a dreary morning when the wheels
Rolled over a wide plain o'erhung with clouds,
And nothing cheered our way till first we saw
The long-roofed chapel of King's College lift
Turrets and pinnacles in answering files,
Extended high above a dusky grove.

Advancing, we espied upon the road
A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap,
Striding along as if o'ertasked by Time,
Or covetous of exercise and air;
He passed—nor was I master of my eyes
Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.
As near and nearer to the spot we drew,
It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force.

Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught,
While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam;
And at the *Hoop* alighted, famous Inn.

My spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope;
Some friends I had, acquaintances who there
Seemed friends, poor simple school-boys, now hung round
With honour and importance: in a world
Of welcome faces up and down I roved;
Questions, directions, warnings and advice,
Flowed in upon me, from all sides; fresh day
Of pride and pleasure! to myself I seemed
A man of business and expense, and went
From shop to shop about my own affairs,
To Tutor or to Tailor, as befel,
From street to street with loose and careless mind.

I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed
Delighted through the motley spectacle;
Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,
Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers:
Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,
A northern villager.

As if the change

Had waited on some Fairy's wand, at once
Behold me rich in monies, and attired
In splendid garb, with hose of silk, and hair
Powdered like rimy trees, when frost is keen.
My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by,
With other signs of manhood that supplied
The lack of beard.—The weeks went roundly on,
With invitations, suppers, wine and fruit,
Smooth housekeeping within, and all without
Liberal, and suiting gentleman's array.

The Evangelist St. John my patron was:
Three Gothic courts are his, and in the first
Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure;
Right underneath, the College kitchens made
A humming sound, less tuneable than bees,
But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes
Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.
Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock,
Who never let the quarters, night or day,
Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours
Twice over with a male and female voice.
Her pealing organ was my neighbour too;
And from my pillow, looking forth by light
Of moon or favouring stars, I could behold

The antechapel where the statue stood
Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

Of College labours, of the Lecturer's room
All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,
With loyal students faithful to their books,
Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,
And honest dunces—of important days,
Examinations, when the man was weighed
As in a balance! of excessive hopes,
Tremblings withal and commendable fears,
Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad,
Let others that know more speak as they know.
Such glory was but little sought by me,
And little won. Yet from the first crude days
Of settling time in this untried abode,
I was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts,
Wishing to hope without a hope, some fears
About my future worldly maintenance,
And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind,
A feeling that I was not for that hour,
Nor for that place. But wherefore be cast down?
For (not to speak of Reason and her pure

Reflective acts to fix the moral law
Deep in the conscience, nor of Christian Hope,
Bowing her head before her sister Faith
As one far mightier), hither I had come,
Bear witness Truth, endowed with holy powers
And faculties, whether to work or feel.
Oft when the dazzling show no longer new
Had ceased to dazzle, ofttimes did I quit
My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves,
And as I paced alone the level fields
Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
With which I had been conversant, the mind
Drooped not; but there into herself returning,
With prompt rebound seemed fresh as heretofore.
At least I more distinctly recognised
Her native instincts: let me dare to speak
A higher language, say that now I felt
What independent solaces were mine,
To mitigate the injurious sway of place
Or circumstance, how far soever changed
In youth, or to be changed in manhood's prime;
Or for the few who shall be called to look
On the long shadows in our evening years,
Ordained precursors to the night of death.
As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,

I looked for universal things; perused
The common countenance of earth and sky:
Earth, nowhere unembellished by some trace
Of that first Paradise whence man was driven:
And sky, whose beauty and bounty are expressed
By the proud name she bears—the name of Heaven.
I called on both to teach me what they might;
Or turning the mind in upon herself
Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts
And spread them with a wider creeping; felt
Incumbencies more awful, visitings
Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,
That tolerates the indignities of Time,
And, from the centre of Eternity
All finite motions overruling, lives
In glory immutable. But peace! enough
Here to record that I was mounting now
To such community with highest truth—
A track pursuing, not untrod before,
From strict analogies by thought supplied
Or consciousnesses not to be subdued.
To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass

Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
That I beheld respired with inward meaning.
Add that whate'er of Terror or of Love
Or Beauty, Nature's daily face put on
From transitory passion, unto this
I was as sensitive as waters are
To the sky's influence in a kindred mood
Of passion; was obedient as a lute
That waits upon the touches of the wind.
Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich—
I had a world about me—'twas my own;
I made it, for it only lived to me,
And to the God who sees into the heart.
Such sympathies, though rarely, were betrayed
By outward gestures and by visible looks:
Some called it madness—so indeed it was,
If child-like fruitfulness in passing joy,
If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured
To inspiration, sort with such a name;
If prophecy be madness; if things viewed
By poets in old time, and higher up
By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,
May in these tutored days no more be seen
With undisordered sight. But leaving this,
It was no madness, for the bodily eye

Amid my strongest workings evermore
Was searching out the lines of difference
As they lie hid in all external forms,
Near or remote, minute or vast, an eye
Which from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,
To the broad ocean and the azure heavens
Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,
Could find no surface where its power might sleep;
Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
And by an unrelenting agency
Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

And here, O Friend! have I retraced my life
Up to an eminence, and told a tale
Of matters which not falsely may be called
The glory of my youth. Of genius, power,
Creation and divinity itself
I have been speaking, for my theme has been
What passed within me. Not of outward things
Done visibly for other minds, words, signs,
Symbols or actions, but of my own heart
Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.
O Heavens! how awful is the might of souls,
And what they do within themselves while yet
The yoke of earth is new to them, the world

Nothing but a wild field where they were sown.
This is, in truth, heroic argument,
This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch
With hand however weak, but in the main
It lies far hidden from the reach of words.
Points have we all of us within our souls
Where all stand single; this I feel, and make
Breathings for incommunicable powers;
But is not each a memory to himself,
And, therefore, now that we must quit this theme,
I am not heartless, for there's not a man
That lives who hath not known his god-like hours,
And feels not what an empire we inherit
As natural beings in the strength of Nature.

No more: for now into a populous plain
We must descend. A Traveller I am,
Whose tale is only of himself; even so,
So be it, if the pure of heart be prompt
To follow, and if thou, my honoured Friend!
Who in these thoughts art ever at my side,
Support, as heretofore, my fainting steps.

It hath been told, that when the first delight
That flashed upon me from this novel show

Had failed, the mind returned into herself;
Yet true it is, that I had made a change
In climate, and my nature's outward coat
Changed also slowly and insensibly.
Full oft the quiet and exalted thoughts
Of loneliness gave way to empty noise
And superficial pastimes; now and then
Forced labour, and more frequently forced hopes;
And, worst of all, a treasonable growth
Of indecisive judgments, that impaired
And shook the mind's simplicity.—And yet
This was a gladsome time. Could I behold—
Who, less insensible than sodden clay
In a sea-river's bed at ebb of tide,
Could have beheld,—with undelighted heart,
So many happy youths, so wide and fair
A congregation in its budding-time
Of health, and hope, and beauty, all at once
So many divers samples from the growth
Of life's sweet season—could have seen unmoved
That miscellaneous garland of wild flowers
Decking the matron temples of a place
So famous through the world? To me, at least,
It was a goodly prospect: for, in sooth,
Though I had learnt betimes to stand unpropped,

And independent musings pleased me so
That spells seemed on me when I was alone,
Yet could I only cleave to solitude
In lonely places; if a throng was near
That way I leaned by nature; for my heart
Was social, and loved idleness and joy.

Not seeking those who might participate
My deeper pleasures (nay, I had not once,
Though not unused to mutter lonesome songs,
Even with myself divided such delight,
Or looked that way for aught that might be clothed
In human language), easily I passed
From the remembrances of better things,
And slipped into the ordinary works
Of careless youth, unburthened, unalarmed.
Caverns there were within my mind which sun
Could never penetrate, yet did there not
Want store of leafy *arbours* where the light
Might enter in at will. Companionships,
Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all.
We sauntered, played, or rioted; we talked
Unprofitable talk at morning hours;
Drifted about along the streets and walks,
Read lazily in trivial books, went forth

To gallop through the country in blind zeal
Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast
Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars
Come forth, perhaps without one quiet thought.

Such was the tenor of the second act
In this new life. Imagination slept,
And yet not utterly. I could not print
Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
Of generations of illustrious men,
Unmoved. I could not always lightly pass [slept,
Through the same gateways, sleep where they had
Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,
That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.
Place also by the side of this dark sense
Of noble feeling, that those spiritual men,
Even the great Newton's own ethereal self,
Seemed humbled in these precincts thence to be
The more endeared. Their several memories here
(Even like their persons in their portraits clothed
With the accustomed garb of daily life)
Put on a lowly and a touching grace
Of more distinct humanity, that left
All genuine admiration unimpaired.

Beside the pleasant Mill of Trompington
I laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade;
Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales
Of amorous passion. And that gentle Bard,
Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State—
Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,
I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend!
Yea, our blind Poet, who, in his later day,
Stood almost single; uttering odious truth—
Darkness before, and danger's voice behind,
Soul awful—if the earth has ever lodged
An awful soul—I seemed to see him here
Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress
Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth—
A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
And conscious step of purity and pride.
Among the band of my compeers was one
Whom chance had stationed in the very room
Honoured by Milton's name. O temperate Bard!
Be it confest that, for the first time, seated
Within thy innocent lodge and oratory,
One of a festive circle, I poured out
Libations, to thy memory drank, till pride

And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain
Never excited by the fumes of wine
Before that hour, or since. Then, forth I ran
From the assembly ; through a length of streets,
Ran, ostrich-like, to reach our chapel door
In not a desperate or opprobrious time,
Albeit long after the importunate bell
Had stopped, with wearisome Cassandra voice
No longer haunting the dark winter night.
Call back, O Friend ! a moment to thy mind
The place itself and fashion of the rites.
With careless ostentation shouldering up
My surplice, through the inferior throng I clove
Of the plain Burghers, who in audience stood
On the last skirts of their permitted ground,
Under the pealing organ. Empty thoughts !
I am ashamed of them : and that great Bard,
And thou, O Friend ! who in thy ample mind
Hast placed me high above my best deserts,
Ye will forgive the weakness of that hour,
In some of its unworthy vanities,
Brother to many more.

In this mixed sort
The months passed on, remissly, not given up
To wilful alienation from the right,

Or walks of open scandal, but in vague
And loose indifference, easy likings, aims
Of a low pitch—duty and zeal dismissed,
Yet Nature, or a happy course of things
Not doing in their stead the needful work.
The memory languidly revolved, the heart
Reposed in noontide rest, the inner pulse
Of contemplation almost failed to beat.
Such life might not inaptly be compared
To a floating island, an amphibious spot
Unsound, of spongy texture, yet withal
Not wanting a fair face of water weeds
And pleasant flowers. The thirst of living praise,
Fit reverence for the glorious Dead, the sight
Of those long vistas, sacred catacombs,
Where mighty *minds* lie visibly entombed,
Have often stirred the heart of youth, and bred
A fervent love of rigorous discipline.—
Alas! such high emotion touched not me.
Look was there none within these walls to shame
My easy spirits, and discountenance
Their light composure, far less to instil
A calm resolve of mind, firmly addressed
To puissant efforts. Nor was this the blame
Of others but my own; I should, in truth,

As far as doth concern my single self,
Misdeem most widely, lodging it elsewhere:
For I, bred up 'mid Nature's luxuries,
Was a spoiled child, and rambling like the wind,
As I had done in daily intercourse
With those crystalline rivers, solemn heights,
And mountains, ranging like a fowl of the air,
I was ill-tutored for captivity;
To quit my pleasure, and, from month to month,
Take up a station calmly on the perch
Of sedentary peace. Those lovely forms
Had also left less space within my mind,
Which, wrought upon instinctively, had found
A freshness in those objects of her love,
A winning power, beyond all other power.
Not that I slighted books,—that were to lack
All sense,—but other passions in me ruled,
Passions more fervent, making me less prompt
To in-door study than was wise or well,
Or suited to those years. Yet I, though used
In magisterial liberty to rove,
Culling such flowers of learning as might tempt
A random choice, could shadow forth a place
(If now I yield not to a flattering dream)
Whose studious aspect should have bent me down

To instantaneous service; should at once
Have made me pay to science and to arts
And written lore, acknowledged my liege lord,
A homage frankly offered up, like that
Which I had paid to Nature. Toil and pains
In this recess, by thoughtful Fancy built,
Should spread from heart to heart; and stately groves,
Majestic edifices, should not want
A corresponding dignity within.
The congregating temper that pervades
Our unripe years, not wasted, should be taught
To minister to works of high attempt—
Works which the enthusiast would perform with love.
Youth should be awed, religiously possessed
With a conviction of the power that waits
On knowledge, when sincerely sought and prized
For its own sake, on glory and on praise
If but by labour won, and fit to endure
The passing day; should learn to put aside
Her trappings here, should strip them off abashed
Before antiquity and stedfast truth
And strong book-mindedness; and over all
A healthy sound simplicity should reign,
A seemly plainness, name it what you will,
Republican or pious.

If these thoughts
Are a gratuitous emblazonry
That mocks the recreant age *we* live in, then
Be Folly and False-seeming free to affect
Whatever formal gait of discipline
Shall raise them highest in their own esteem—
Let them parade among the Schools at will,
But spare the House of God. Was ever known
The witless shepherd who persists to drive
A flock that thirsts not to a pool disliked?
A weight must surely hang on days begun
And ended with such mockery. Be wise,
Ye Presidents and Deans, and, till the spirit
Of ancient times revive, and youth be trained
At home in pious service, to your bells
Give seasonable rest, for 'tis a sound
Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air;
And your officious doings bring disgrace
On the plain steeples of our English Church,
Whose worship, 'mid remotest village trees,
Suffers for this. Even Science, too, at hand
In daily sight of this irreverence,
Is smitten thence with an unnatural taint,
Loses her just authority, falls beneath
Collateral suspicion, else unknown.

This truth escaped me not, and I confess,
That having 'mid my native hills given loose
To a schoolboy's vision, I had raised a pile
Upon the basis of the coming time,
That fell in ruins round me. Oh, what joy
To see a sanctuary for our country's youth
Informed with such a spirit as might be
Its own protection; a primeval grove,
Where, though the shades with cheerfulness were filled,
Nor indigent of songs warbled from crowds
In under-coverts, yet the countenance
Of the whole place should bear a stamp of awe;
A habitation sober and demure
For ruminating creatures; a domain
For quiet things to wander in; a haunt
In which the heron should delight to feed
By the shy rivers, and the pelican
Upon the cypress spire in lonely thought
Might sit and sun himself.—Alas! Alas!
In vain for such solemnity I looked;
Mine eyes were crossed by butterflies, ears vexed
By chattering popinjays; the inner heart
Seemed trivial, and the impresses without
Of a too gaudy region.

Different sight

Those venerable Doctors saw of old,
When all who dwelt within these famous walls
Led in abstemiousness a studious life;
When, in forlorn and naked chambers cooped
And crowded, o'er the ponderous books they hung
Like caterpillars eating out their way
In silence, or with keen devouring noise
Not to be tracked or fathered. Princes then
At matins froze, and couched at curfew-time,
Trained up through piety and zeal to prize
Spare diet, patient labour, and plain weeds.
O seat of Arts! renowned throughout the world!
Far different service in those homely days
The Muses' modest nurslings underwent
From their first childhood: in that glorious time
When Learning, like a stranger come from far,
Sounding through Christian lands her trumpet, roused
Peasant and king; when boys and youths, the growth
Of ragged villages and crazy huts,
Forsook their homes, and, errant in the quest
Of Patron, famous school or friendly nook,
Where, pensioned, they in shelter might sit down,
From town to town and through wide scattered realms
Journeyed with ponderous folios in their hands;
And often, starting from some covert place,

Saluted the chance comer on the road,
Crying, "An obolus, a penny give
To a poor scholar!"—when illustrious men,
Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon, read
Before the doors or windows of their cells
By moonshine through mere lack of taper light.

But peace to vain regrets! We see but darkly
Even when we look behind us, and best things
Are not so pure by nature that they needs
Must keep to all, as fondly all believe,
Their highest promise. If the mariner,
When at reluctant distance he hath passed
Some tempting island, could but know the ills
That must have fallen upon him had he brought
His bark to land upon the wished-for shore,
Good cause would oft be his to thank the surf
Whose white belt scared him thence, or wind that blew
Inexorably adverse: for myself
I grieve not; happy is the gownèd youth,
Who only misses what I missed, who falls
No lower than I fell.
I did not love,
Judging not ill perhaps, the timid course

Of our scholastic studies ; could have wished
To see the river flow with ampler range
And freer pace ; but more, far more, I grieved
To see displayed among an eager few,
Who in the field of contest persevered,
Passions unworthy of youth's generous heart
And mounting spirit, pitiably repaid,
When so disturbed, whatever palms are won.
From these I turned to travel with the shoal
Of more unthinking natures, easy minds
And pillowy ; yet not wanting love that makes
The day pass lightly on, when foresight sleeps,
And wisdom and the pledges interchanged
With our own inner being are forgot.

Yet was this deep vacation not given up
To utter waste. Hitherto I had stood
In my own mind remote from social life,
(At least from what we commonly so name,)
Like a lone shepherd on a promontory
Who lacking occupation looks far forth
Into the boundless sea, and rather makes
Than finds what he beholds. And sure it is,
That this first transit from the smooth delights
And wild outlandish walks of simple youth

To something that resembles an approach
Towards human business, to a privileged world
Within a world, a midway residence
With all its intervenient imagery,
Did better suit my visionary mind,
Far better, than to have been bolted forth,
Thrust out abruptly into Fortune's way
Among the conflicts of substantial life ;
By a more just gradation did lead on
To higher things ; more naturally matured,
For permanent possession, better fruits,
Whether of truth or virtue, to ensue.
In serious mood, but oftener, I confess,
With playful zest of fancy did we note
(How could we less ?) the manners and the ways
Of those who lived distinguished by the badge
Of good or ill report ; or those with whom
By frame of Academic discipline
We were perforce connected, men whose sway
And known authority of office served
To set our minds on edge, and did no more.
Nor wanted we rich pastime of this kind,
Found everywhere, but chiefly in the ring
Of the grave Elders, men unscoured, grotesque
In character, tricked out like aged trees

Which through the lapse of their infirmity
Give ready place to any random seed
That chooses to be reared upon their trunks.

Here on my view, confronting vividly
Those shepherd swains whom I had lately left,
Appeared a different aspect of old age:
How different! yet both distinctly marked,
Objects embossed to catch the general eye,
Or portraitures for special use designed,
As some might seem, so aptly do they serve
To illustrate Nature's book of rudiments—
That book upheld as with maternal care
When she would enter on her tender scheme
Of teaching comprehension with delight,
And mingling playful with pathetic thoughts.

The surfaces of artificial life
And manners finely wrought, the delicate race
Of colours, lurking, gleaming up and down
Through that state arras woven with silk and gold;
This wily interchange of snaky hues,
Willingly or unwillingly revealed,
I neither knew nor cared for; and as such
Were wanting here, I took what might be found

Of less elaborate fabric. At this day
I smile, in many a mountain solitude
Conjuring up scenes as obsolete in freaks
Of character, in points of wit as broad,
As aught by wooden images performed
For entertainment of the gaping crowd
At wake or fair. And oftentimes do flit
Remembrances before me of old men—
Old humourists, who have been long in their graves,
And having almost in my mind put off
Their human names, have into phantoms passed
Of texture midway between life and books.

I play the loiterer: 'tis enough to note
That here in dwarf proportions were expressed
The limbs of the great world; its eager strifes
Collaterally pourtrayed, as in mock fight,
A tournament of blows, some hardly dealt
Though short of mortal combat; and whate'er
Might in this pageant be supposed to hit
An artless rustic's notice, this way less,
More that way, was not wasted upon me—
And yet the spectacle may well demand
A more substantial name, no mimic show,
Itself a living part of a live whole,

A creek in the vast sea; for, all degrees
And shapes of spurious fame and short-lived praise
Here sate in state, and fed with daily alms
Retainers won away from solid good;
And here was Labour, his own bond-slave; Hope,
That never set the pains against the prize;
Idleness halting with his weary clog,
And poor misguided Shame, and witless Fear,
And simple Pleasure foraging for Death;
Honour misplaced, and Dignity astray;
Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, and guile
Murmuring submission, and bald government,
(The idol weak as the idolator,)
And Decency and Custom starving Truth,
And blind Authority beating with his staff
The child that might have led him; Emptiness
Followed as of good omen, and meek Worth
Left to herself unheard of and unknown.

Of these and other kindred notices
I cannot say what portion is in truth
The naked recollection of that time,
And what may rather have been called to life
By after-meditation. But delight
That, in an easy temper lulled asleep,

Is still with Innocence its own reward,
This was not wanting. Carelessly I roamed
As through a wide museum from whose stores
A casual rarity is singled out
And has its brief perusal, then gives way
To others, all supplanted in their turn;
Till 'mid this crowded neighbourhood of things
That are by nature most unneighbourly,
The head turns round and cannot right itself;
And though an aching and a barren sense
Of gay confusion still be uppermost,
With few wise longings and but little love,
Yet to the memory something cleaves at last,
Whence profit may be drawn in times to come.

Thus in submissive idleness, my Friend!
The labouring time of autumn, winter, spring,
Eight months! rolled pleasingly away; the ninth
Came and returned me to my native hills.

BOOK IV

SUMMER VACATION

BOOK FOURTH

SUMMER VACATION

Bright was the summer's noon when quickening steps
Followed each other till a dreary moor
Was crossed, a bare ridge clomb, upon whose top
Standing alone, as from a rampart's edge,
I overlooked the bed of Windermere,
Like a vast river, stretching in the sun.
With exultation, at my feet I saw
Lake, islands, promontories, gleaming bays,
A universe of Nature's fairest forms
Proudly revealed with instantaneous burst,
Magnificent, and beautiful, and gay.
I bounded down the hill shouting amain
For the old Ferryman; to the shout the rocks
Replied, and when the Charon of the flood
Had staid his oars, and touched the jutting pier,

I did not step into the well-known boat
Without a cordial greeting. Thence with speed
Up the familiar hill I took my way
Towards that sweet Valley where I had been reared;
'Twas but a short hour's walk, ere veering round
I saw the snow-white church upon her hill
Sit like a thronèd Lady, sending out
A gracious look all over her domain.
Yon azure smoke betrays the lurking town;
With eager footsteps I advance and reach
The cottage threshold where my journey closed.
Glad welcome had I, with some tears, perhaps,
From my old Dame, so kind and motherly,
While she perused me with a parent's pride.
The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew
Upon thy grave, good creature! While my heart
Can beat never will I forget thy name.
Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest
After thy innocent and busy stir
In narrow cares, thy little daily growth
Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years,
And more than eighty, of untroubled life,
Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood
Honoured with little less than filial love.
What joy was mine to see thee once again,

Thee and thy dwelling, and a crowd of things
About its narrow precincts all beloved,
And many of them seeming yet my own!
Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts
Have felt, and every man alive can guess?
The rooms, the court, the garden were not left
Long unsaluted, nor the sunny seat
Round the stone table under the dark pine,
Friendly to studious or to festive hours;
Nor that unruly child of mountain birth,
The famous brook, who, soon as he was boxed
Within our garden, found himself at once,
As if by trick insidious and unkind,
Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down
(Without an effort and without a will)
A channel paved by man's officious care.
I looked at him and smiled, and smiled again,
And in the press of twenty thousand thoughts,
"Ha," quoth I, "pretty prisoner, are you there!"
Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered,
"An emblem here behold of thy own life;
In its late course of even days with all
Their smooth enthralment;" but the heart was full,
Too full for that reproach. My aged Dame
Walked proudly at my side: she guided me;

I willing, nay—nay, wishing to be led.
—The face of every neighbour whom I met
Was like a volume to me ; some were hailed
Upon the road, some busy at their work,
Unceremonious greetings interchanged
With half the length of a long field between.
Among my schoolfellows I scattered round
Like recognitions, but with some constraint
Attended, doubtless, with a little pride,
But with more shame, for my habiliments,
The transformation wrought by gay attire.
Not less delighted did I take my place
At our domestic table : and, dear Friend !
In this endeavour simply to relate
A Poet's history, may I leave untold
The thankfulness with which I laid me down
In my accustomed bed, more welcome now
Perhaps than if it had been more desired
Or been more often thought of with regret ;
That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind
Roar and the rain beat hard, where I so oft
Had lain awake on summer nights to watch
The moon in splendour couched among the leaves
Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood ;
Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro

In the dark summit of the waving tree
She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.

Among the favourites whom it pleased me well
To see again, was one by ancient right
Our inmate, a rough terrier of the hills;
By birth and call of nature pre-ordained
To hunt the badger and unearth the fox
Among the impervious crags, but having been
From youth our own adopted, he had passed
Into a gentler service. And when first
The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day
Along my veins I kindled with the stir,
The fermentation, and the vernal heat
Of poesy, affecting private shades
Like a sick Lover, then this dog was used
To watch me, an attendant and a friend,
Obsequious to my steps early and late,
Though often of such dilatory walk
Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made.
A hundred times when, roving high and low,
I have been harassed with the toil of verse,
Much pains and little progress, and at once
Some lovely Image in the song rose up
Full-formed, like Venus rising from the sea;

Then have I darted forwards to let loose
My hand upon his back with stormy joy,
Caressing him again and yet again.
And when at evening on the public way
I sauntered, like a river murmuring
And talking to itself when all things else
Are still, the creature trotted on before;
Such was his custom; but whene'er he met
A passenger approaching, he would turn
To give me timely notice, and straightway,
Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed
My voice, composed my gait, and, with the air
And mien of one whose thoughts are free, advanced
To give and take a greeting that might save
My name from piteous rumours, such as wait
On men suspected to be crazed in brain.

Those walks well worthy to be prized and loved—
Regretted!—that word, too, was on my tongue,
But they were richly laden with all good,
And cannot be remembered but with thanks
And gratitude, and perfect joy of heart—
Those walks in all their freshness now came back
Like a returning Spring. When first I made
Once more a circuit of our little lake,

If ever happiness hath lodged with man,
That day consummate happiness was mine,
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.
The sun was set, or setting, when I left
Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on
A sober hour, not winning or serene,
For cold and raw the air was, and untuned;
But as a face we love is sweetest then
When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look
It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart
Have fulness in herself; even so with me
It fared that evening. Gently did my soul
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
Naked, as in the presence of her God.
While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
A heart that had not been disconsolate:
Strength came where weakness was not known to be,
At least not felt; and restoration came
Like an intruder knocking at the door
Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.
—Of that external scene which round me lay,
Little, in this abstraction, did I see;
Remembered less; but I had inward hopes
And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,

Conversed with promises, had glimmering views
How life pervades the undecaying mind ;
How the immortal soul with God-like power
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
That time can lay upon her ; how on earth,
Man, if he do but live within the light
Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad
His being armed with strength that cannot fail.
Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love
Of innocence, and holiday repose ;
And more than pastoral quiet, 'mid the stir
Of boldest projects, and a peaceful end
At last, or glorious, by endurance won.
Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down
Alone, continuing there to muse : the slopes
And heights meanwhile were slowly overspread
With darkness, and before a rippling breeze
The long lake lengthened out its hoary line,
And in the sheltered copice where I sate,
Around me from among the hazel leaves,
Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,
Came ever and anon a breath-like sound,
Quick as the pantings of the faithful dog,
The off and on companion of my walk ;
And such, at times, believing them to be,

I turned my head to look if he were there ;
Then into solemn thought I passed once more.

A freshness also found I at this time
In human Life, the daily life of those
Whose occupations really I loved ;
The peaceful scene oft filled me with surprise
Changed like a garden in the heat of spring
After an eight-days' absence. For (to omit
The things which were the same and yet appeared
Far otherwise) amid this rural solitude,
A narrow Vale where each was known to all,
'Twas not indifferent to a youthful mind
To mark some sheltering bower or sunny nook,
Where an old man had used to sit alone,
Now vacant ; pale-faced babes whom I had left
In arms, now rosy prattlers at the feet
Of a pleased grandame tottering up and down ;
And growing girls whose beauty, filched away
With all its pleasant promises, was gone
To deck some slighted playmate's homely cheek.

Yes, I had something of a subtler sense,
And often looking round was moved to smiles
Such as a delicate work of humour breeds ;

I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts,
Of those plain-living people now observed
With clearer knowledge; with another eye
I saw the quiet woodman in the woods,
The shepherd roam the hills. With new delight,
This chiefly, did I note my grey-haired Dame;
Saw her go forth to church or other work
Of state, equipped in monumental trim;
Short velvet cloak, (her bonnet of the like,)
A mantle such as Spanish Cavaliers
Wore in old time. Her smooth domestic life,
Affectionate without disquietude,
Her talk, her business, pleased me; and no less
Her clear though shallow stream of piety
That ran on Sabbath days a fresher course;
With thoughts unfelt till now I saw her read
Her Bible on hot Sunday afternoons,
And loved the book, when she had dropped asleep
And made of it a pillow for her head.

Nor less do I remember to have felt,
Distinctly manifested at this time,
A human-heartedness about my love
For objects hitherto the absolute wealth
Of my own private being and no more:

Which I had loved, even as a blessed spirit
Or Angel, if he were to dwell on earth,
Might love in individual happiness.
But now there opened on me other thoughts
Of change, congratulation or regret,
A pensive feeling! It spread far and wide;
The trees, the mountains shared it, and the brooks,
The stars of Heaven, now seen in their old haunts—
White Sirius glittering o'er the southern crags,
Orion with his belt, and those fair Seven,
Acquaintances of every little child,
And Jupiter, my own beloved star!
Whatever shadings of mortality,
Whatever imports from the world of death
Had come among these objects heretofore,
Were, in the main, of mood less tender: strong,
Deep, gloomy were they, and severe; the scatterings
Of awe or tremulous dread, that had given way
In later youth to yearnings of a love
Enthusiastic, to delight and hope.

As one who hangs down bending from the side
Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast
Of a still water, solacing himself
With such discoveries as his eye can make

Beneath him in the bottom of the deep,
Sees many beauteous sights—weeds, fishes, flowers,
Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more,
Yet often is perplexed and cannot part
The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth
Of the clear flood, from things which there abide
In their true dwelling; now is crossed by gleam
Of his own image, by a sun-beam now,
And wavering motions sent he knows not whence,
Impediments that make his task more sweet;
Such pleasant office have we long pursued
Incumbent o'er the surface of past time
With like success, nor often have appeared
Shapes fairer or less doubtfully discerned
Than these to which the Tale, indulgent Friend!
Would now direct thy notice. Yet in spite
Of pleasure won, and knowledge not withheld,
There was an inner falling off—I loved,
Loved deeply all that had been loved before,
More deeply even than ever: but a swarm
Of heady schemes jostling each other, gawds,
And feast and dance, and public revelry,
And sports and games (too grateful in themselves,
Yet in themselves less grateful, I believe,

Than as they were a badge glossy and fresh
Of manliness and freedom) all conspired
To lure my mind from firm habitual quest
Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal
And damp those yearnings which had once been mine —
A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up
To his own eager thoughts. It would demand
Some skill, and longer time than may be spared,
To paint these vanities, and how they wrought
In haunts where they, till now, had been unknown.
It seemed the very garments that I wore
Preyed on my strength, and stopped the quiet stream
Of self-forgetfulness.
Yes, that heartless chase
Of trivial pleasures was a poor exchange
For books and nature at that early age.
'Tis true, some casual knowledge might be gained
Of character or life; but at that time,
Of manners put to school I took small note,
And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere.
Far better had it been to exalt the mind
By solitary study, to uphold
Intense desire through meditative peace;
And yet, for chastisement of these regrets,
The memory of one particular hour

Doth here rise up against me. 'Mid a throng
Of maids and youths, old men, and matrons staid,
A medley of all tempers, I had passed
The night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth,
With din of instruments and shuffling feet,
And glancing forms, and tapers glittering,
And unaimed prattle flying up and down;
Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there
Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed,
Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,
And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired,
The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky
Was kindling, not unseen, from humble copse
And open field, through which the pathway wound,
And homeward led my steps. Magnificent
The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front,
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
And in the meadows and the lower grounds
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
And labourers going forth to till the fields.

Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

Strange rendezvous! My mind was at that time
A parti-coloured show of grave and gay,
Solid and light, short-sighted and profound;
Of inconsiderate habits and sedate,
Consorting in one mansion unreproved.
The worth I knew of powers that I possessed,
Though slighted and too oft misused. Besides,
That summer, swarming as it did with thoughts
Transient and idle, lacked not intervals
When Folly from the frown of fleeting Time
Shrunk, and the mind experienced in herself
Conformity as just as that of old
To the end and written spirit of God's works,
Whether held forth in Nature or in Man,
Through pregnant vision, separate or conjoined.

When from our better selves we have too long
Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,

Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,
How gracious, how benign, is Solitude;
How potent a mere image of her sway;
Most potent when impressed upon the mind
With an appropriate human centre—hermit,
Deep in the bosom of the wilderness;
Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot
Is treading, where no other face is seen)
Kneeling at prayers; or watchman on the top
Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves;
Or as the soul of that great Power is met
Sometimes embodied on a public road,
When, for the night deserted, it assumes
A character of quiet more profound
Than pathless wastes.
Once, when those summer months
Were flown, and autumn brought its annual show
Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,
Upon Winander's spacious breast, it chanced
That—after I had left a flower-decked room
(Whose in-door pastime, lighted up, survived
To a late hour), and spirits overwrought
Were making night do penance for a day
Spent in a round of strenuous idleness—
My homeward course led up a long ascent,

Where the road's watery surface, to the top
Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon
And bore the semblance of another stream
Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook
That murmured in the vale. All else was still;
No living thing appeared in earth or air,
And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,
Sound there was none—but, lo! an uncouth shape,
Shown by a sudden turning of the road,
So near that, slipping back into the shade
Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,
Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,
A span above man's common measure, tall,
Stiff, lank, and upright; a more meagre man
Was never seen before by night or day.
Long were his arms, pallid his hands; his mouth
Looked ghastly in the moonlight: from behind,
A mile-stone propped him; I could also ken
That he was clothed in military garb,
Though faded, yet entire. Companionless,
No dog attending, by no staff sustained,
He stood, and in his very dress appeared
A desolation, a simplicity,
To which the trappings of a gaudy world
Make a strange back-ground. From his lips, ere long,

Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain
Or some uneasy thought ; yet still his form
Kept the same awful steadiness—at his feet
His shadow lay, and moved not. From self-blame
Not wholly free, I watched him thus ; at length
Subduing my heart's specious cowardice,
I left the shady nook where I had stood
And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place
He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm
In measured gesture lifted to his head
Returned my salutation ; then resumed
His station as before ; and when I asked
His history, the veteran, in reply,
Was neither slow nor eager ; but, unmoved,
And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,
A stately air of mild indifference,
He told in few plain words a soldier's tale—
That in the Tropic Islands he had served,
Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past ;
That on his landing he had been dismissed,
And now was travelling towards his native home.
This heard, I said, in pity, "Come with me."
He stooped, and straightway from the ground took
An oaken staff by me yet unobserved—
A staff which must have dropt from his slack hand

And lay till now neglected in the grass.
Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared
To travel without pain, and I beheld,
With an astonishment but ill suppressed,
His ghostly figure moving at my side;
Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear
To turn from present hardships to the past,
And speak of war, battle, and pestilence,
Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared,
On what he might himself have seen or felt.
He all the while was in demeanour calm,
Concise in answer; solemn and sublime
He might have seemed, but that in all he said
There was a strange half-absence, as of one
Knowing too well the importance of his theme,
But feeling it no longer. Our discourse
Soon ended, and together on we passed
In silence through a wood gloomy and still.
Up-turning, then, along an open field,
We reached a cottage. At the door I knocked,
And earnestly to charitable care
Commended him as a poor friendless man,
Belated and by sickness overcome.
Assured that now the traveller would repose
In comfort, I entreated that henceforth

He would not linger in the public ways,
But ask for timely furtherance and help
Such as his state required. At this reproof,
With the same ghastly mildness in his look,
He said, "My trust is in the God of Heaven,
And in the eye of him who passes me!"

The cottage door was speedily unbarred,
And now the soldier touched his hat once more
With his lean hand, and in a faltering voice,
Whose tone bespake reviving interests
Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned
The farewell blessing of the patient man,
And so we parted. Back I cast a look,
And lingered near the door a little space,
Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

BOOK V

BOOKS

BOOK FIFTH

BOOKS

When Contemplation, like the night-calm felt
Through earth and sky, spreads widely, and sends deep
Into the soul its tranquillising power,
Even then I sometimes grieve for thee, O Man,
Earth's paramount Creature! not so much for woes
That thou endurest; heavy though that weight be,
Cloud-like it mounts, or touched with light divine
Doth melt away; but for those palms achieved,
Through length of time by patient exercise
Of study and hard thought; there, there, it is
That sadness finds its fuel. Hitherto,
In progress through this Verse, my mind hath looked
Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven
As her prime teacher, intercourse with man
Established by the sovereign Intellect,
Who through that bodily image hath diffused,

As might appear to the eye of fleeting time,
A deathless spirit. Thou also, man! hath wrought,
For commerce of thy nature with herself,
Things that aspire to unconquerable life;
And yet we feel—we cannot choose but feel—
That they must perish. Tremblings of the heart
It gives, to think that our immortal being
No more shall need such garments; and yet man,
As long as he shall be the child of earth,
Might almost "weep to have" what he may lose,
Nor be himself extinguished, but survive,
Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.
A thought is with me sometimes, and I say,—
Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes
Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch
Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
Old Ocean, in his bed left singed and bare,
Yet would the living Presence still subsist
Victorious, and composure would ensue,
And kindlings like the morning—presage sure
Of day returning and of life revived.
But all the meditations of mankind,
Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth
By reason built, or passion, which itself
Is highest reason in a soul sublime;

The consecrated works of Bard and Sage,
Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,
Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes;
Where would they be? Oh! why hath not the Mind
Some element to stamp her image on
In nature somewhat nearer to her own?
Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?

One day, when from my lips a like complaint
Had fallen in presence of a studious friend,
He with a smile made answer, that in truth
'Twas going far to seek disquietude;
But on the front of his reproof confessed
That he himself had oftentimes given way
To kindred hauntings. Whereupon I told,
That once in the stillness of a summer's noon,
While I was seated in a rocky cave
By the sea-side, perusing, so it chanced,
The famous history of the errant knight
Recorded by Cervantes, these same thoughts
Beset me, and to height unusual rose,
While listlessly I sate, and, having closed
The book, had turned my eyes toward the wide sea.
On poetry and geometric truth,

And their high privilege of lasting life,
From all internal injury exempt,
I mused upon these chiefly : and at length,
My senses yielding to the sultry air,
Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream.
I saw before me stretched a boundless plain
Of sandy wilderness, all black and void,
And as I looked around, distress and fear
Came creeping over me, when at my side,
Close at my side, an uncouth shape appeared
Upon a dromedary, mounted high.
He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes :
A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell
Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight
Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a guide
Was present, one who with unerring skill
Would through the desert lead me ; and while yet
I looked and looked, self-questioned what this freight
Which the new-comer carried through the waste
Could mean, the Arab told me that the stone
(To give it in the language of the dream)
Was " Euclid's Elements ; " and " This," said he,
" Is something of more worth ; " and at the word
Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape,

In colour so resplendent, with command
That I should hold it to my ear. I did so,
And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
A loud prophetic blast of harmony;
An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold
Destruction to the children of the earth
By deluge, now at hand. No sooner ceased
The song, than the Arab with calm look declared
That all would come to pass of which the voice
Had given forewarning, and that he himself
Was going then to bury those two books:
The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
And wedded soul to soul in purest bond
Of reason, undisturbed by space or time;
The other that was a god, yea many gods,
Had voices more than all the wind, with power
To exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe,
Through every clime, the heart of human kind.
While this was uttering, strange as it may seem,
I wondered not, although I plainly saw
The one to be a stone, the other a shell;
Nor doubted once but that they both were books,
Having a perfect faith in all that passed.
Far stronger, now, grew the desire I felt

To cleave unto this man ; but when I prayed
To share his enterprise, he hurried on
Reckless of me : I followed, not unseen,
For oftentimes he cast a backward look,
Grasping his twofold treasure.—Lance in rest,
He rode, I keeping pace with him ; and now
He, to my fancy, had become the knight
Whose tale Cervantes tells ; yet not the knight,
But was an Arab of the desert too ;
Of these was neither, and was both at once.
His countenance, meanwhile, grew more disturbed;
And, looking backwards when he looked, mine eyes
Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,
A bed of glittering light : I asked the cause :
" It is," said he, " the waters of the deep
Gathering upon us ; " quickening then the pace
Of the unwieldly creature he bestrode,
He left me : I called after him aloud ;
He heeded not ; but, with his twofold charge
Still in his grasp, before me, full in view,
Went hurrying o'er the illimitable waste,
With the fleet waters of a drowning world
In chase of him ; whereat I waked in terror,
And saw the sea before me and the book,
In which I had been reading, at my side.

Full often, taking from the world of sleep
This Arab phantom, which I thus beheld,
This semi-Quixote, I to him have given
A substance, fancied him a living man,
A gentle dweller in the desert, crazed
By love and feeling, and internal thought
Protracted among endless solitudes;
Have shaped him wandering upon this quest!
Nor have I pitied him; but rather felt
Reverence was due to a being thus employed;
And thought that, in the blind and awful lair
Of such a madness, reason did lie couched.
Enow there are on earth to take in charge
Their wives, their children, and their virgin loves,
Or whatsoever else the heart holds dear;
Enow to stir for these; yea, will I say,
Contemplating in soberness the approach
Of an event so dire, by signs in earth
Or heaven made manifest, that I could share
That maniac's fond anxiety, and go
Upon like errand. Oftentimes at least
Me hath such strong entrancement overcome,
When I have held a volume in my hand,
Poor earthly casket of immortal verse,
Shakspeare, or Milton, labourers divine!

Great and benign, indeed, must be the power
Of living nature, which could thus so long
Detain me from the best of other guides
And dearest helpers, left unthanked, unprai-ed,
Even in the time of lisping infancy;
And later down, in prattling childhood even,
While I was travelling back among those days,
How could I ever play an ingrate's part?
Once more should I have made those bowers resound,
By intermingling strains of thankfulness
With their own thoughtless melodies; at least
It might have well beseemed me to repeat
Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again,
In slender accents of sweet verse, some tale
That did bewitch me then, and soothes me now.
O Friend! O Poet! brother of my soul,
Think not that I could pass along untouched
By these remembrances. Yet wherefore speak?
Why call upon a few weak words to say
What is already written in the hearts
Of all that breathe?—what in the path of all
Drops daily from the tongue of every child,
Wherever man is found? The trickling tear
Upon the cheek of listening Infancy
Proclaims it, and the insuperable look

That drinks as if it never could be full.

That portion of my story I shall leave
There registered: whatever else of power
Or pleasure sown, or fostered thus, may be
Peculiar to myself, let that remain
Where still it works, though hidden from all search
Among the depths of time. Yet is it just
That here, in memory of all books which lay
Their sure foundations in the heart of man,
Whether by native prose, or numerous verse,
That in the name of all inspirèd souls,
From Homer the great Thunderer, from the voice
That roars along the bed of Jewish song,
And that more varied and elaborate,
Those trumpet-tones of harmony that shake
Our shores in England,—from those loftiest notes
Down to the low and wren-like warblings, made
For cottagers and spinners at the wheel,
And sun-burnt travellers resting their tired limbs,
Stretched under wayside hedge-rows, ballad tunes,
Food for the hungry ears of little ones,
And of old men who have survived their joys:
'Tis just that in behalf of these, the works,
And of the men that framed them, whether known,

Or sleeping nameless in their scattered graves,
That I should here assert their rights, attest
Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce
Their benediction ; speak of them as Powers
For ever to be hallowed ; only less,
For what we are and what we may become,
Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God,
Or His pure Word by miracle revealed.

Rarely and with reluctance would I stoop
To transitory themes ; yet I rejoice,
And, by these thoughts admonished, will pour out
Thanks with uplifted heart, that I was reared
Safe from an evil which these days have laid
Upon the children of the land, a pest
That might have dried me up, body and soul.
This verse is dedicate to Nature's self,
And things that teach as Nature teaches : then,
Oh ! where had been the Man, the Poet where,
Where had we been, we two, beloved Friend !
If in the season of unperilous choice,
In lieu of wandering, as we did, through vales
Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,
We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed,

Each in his several melancholy walk
Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed,
Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude;
Or rather like a stallèd ox debarred
From touch of growing grass, that may not taste
A flower till it have yielded up its sweets
A prelibation to the mower's scythe.

Behold the parent hen amid her brood,
Though fledged and feathered, and well pleased to part
And straggle from her presence, still a brood,
And she herself from the maternal bond
Still undischarged; yet doth she little more
Than move with them in tenderness and love,
A centre to the circle which they make;
And now and then, alike from need of theirs
And call of her own natural appetites,
She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food,
Which they partake at pleasure. Early died
My honoured Mother, she who was the heart
And hinge of all our learnings and our loves:
She left us destitute, and, as we might,
Trooping together. Little suits it me
To break upon the sabbath of her rest
With any thought that looks at others' blame;

Nor would I praise her but in perfect love.
Hence am I checked : but let me boldly say,
In gratitude, and for the sake of truth,
Unheard by her, that she, not falsely taught,
Fetching her goodness rather from times past,
Than shaping novelties for times to come,
Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust
Our nature, but had virtual faith that He
Who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk,
Doth also for our nobler part provide,
Under His great correction and control,
As innocent instincts, and as innocent food ;
Or draws for minds that are left free to trust
In the simplicities of opening life
Sweet honey out of spurned or dreaded weeds.
This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
From anxious fear of error or mishap,
And evil, overweeningly so called ;
Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,
Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,
Nor with impatience from the season asked
More than its timely produce ; rather loved
The hours for what they are, than from regard
Glanced on their promises in restless pride.

Such was she—not from faculties more strong
Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,
And spot in which she lived, and through a grace
Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,
A heart that found benignity and hope,
Being itself benign.
My drift I fear
Is scarcely obvious; but, that common sense
May try this modern system by its fruits,
Leave let me take to place before her sight
A specimen pourtrayed with faithful hand.
Full early trained to worship seemliness,
This model of a child is never known
To mix in quarrels; that were far beneath
Its dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er
As generous as a fountain; selfishness
May not come near him, nor the little throng
Of flitting pleasures tempt him from his path;
The wandering beggars propagate his name,
Dumb creatures find him tender as a nun,
And natural or supernatural fear,
Unless it leap upon him in a dream,
Touches him not. To enhance the wonder, see
How arch his notices, how nice his sense
Of the ridiculous; not blind is he

To the broad follies of the licensed world,
Yet innocent himself withal, though shrewd,
And can read lectures upon innocence;
A miracle of scientific lore,
Ships he can guide across the pathless sea,
And tell you all their cunning; he can read
The inside of the earth, and spell the stars;
He knows the policies of foreign lands;
Can string you names of districts, cities, towns,
The whole world over, tight as beads of dew
Upon a gossamer thread; he sifts, he weighs;
All things are put to question; he must live
Knowing that he grows wiser every day
Or else not live at all, and seeing too
Each little drop of wisdom as it falls
Into the dimpling cistern of his heart:
For this unnatural growth the trainer blame,
Pity the tree.—Poor human vanity,
Wert thou extinguished, little would be left
Which he could truly love; but how escape?
For, ever as a thought of purer birth
Rises to lead him toward a better clime,
Some intermeddler still is on the watch
To drive him back, and pound him, like a stray,
Within the pinfold of his own conceit.

Meanwhile old grandame earth is grieved to find
The playthings, which her love designed for him,
Unthought of: in their woodland beds the flowers
Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn.
Oh! give us once again the wishing cap
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood,
And Sabra in the forest with St. George!
The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap
One precious gain, that he forgets himself.

These mighty workmen of our later age,
Who, with a broad highway, have overbridged
The froward chaos of futurity,
Tamed to their bidding; they who have the skill
To manage books, and things, and make them act
On infant minds as surely as the sun
Deals with a flower; the keepers of our time,
The guides and wardens of our faculties,
Sages who in their prescience would control
All accidents, and to the very road
Which they have fashioned would confine us down,
Like engines; when will their presumption learn,
That in the unreasoning progress of the world
A wiser spirit is at work for us,

A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
Of blessings, and most studious of our good,
Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours?

There was a Boy: ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander!—many a time
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him; and they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud,
Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
Of jocund din; and, when a lengthened pause
Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene

Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale
Where he was born; the grassy churchyard hangs
Upon a slope above the village school,
And through that churchyard when my way has led
On summer evenings, I believe that there
A long half-hour together I have stood
Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies!
Even now appears before the mind's clear eye
That self-same village church; I see her sit
(The thronèd Lady whom erewhile we hailed)
On her green hill, forgetful of this Boy
Who slumbers at her feet,—forgetful, too,
Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves,
And listening only to the gladsome sounds
That, from the rural school ascending, play
Beneath her and about her. May she long
Behold a race of young ones like to those
With whom I herded!—(easily, indeed,

We might have fed upon a fatter soil
Of arts and letters—but be that forgiven)—
A race of real children; not too wise,
Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,
And bandied up and down by love and hate;
Not unresentful where self-justified;
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy;
Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds;
Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not
In happiness to the happiest upon earth.
Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,
Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds;
May books and Nature be their early joy!
And knowledge, rightly honoured with that name—
Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power!

Well do I call to mind the very week
When I was first intrusted to the care
Of that sweet Valley; when its paths, its shores,
And brooks were like a dream of novelty
To my half-infant thoughts; that very week,
While I was roving up and down alone,
Seeking I knew not what, I chanced to cross

One of those open fields, which, shaped like ears,
Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's Lake:
Twilight was coming on, yet through the gloom
Appeared distinctly on the opposite shore
A heap of garments, as if left by one
Who might have there been bathing. Long I watched,
But no one owned them; meanwhile the calm lake
Grew dark with all the shadows on its breast,
And, now and then, a fish up-leaping snapped
The breathless stillness. The succeeding day,
Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale
Drew to the spot an anxious crowd; some looked
In passive expectation from the shore,
While from a boat others hung o'er the deep,
Sounding with grappling irons and long poles.
At last, the dead man, 'mid that beauteous scene
Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright
Rose, with his ghastly face, a spectre shape
Of terror; yet no soul-debasing fear,
Young as I was, a child not nine years old,
Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen
Such sights before, among the shining streams
Of faëry land, the forest of romance.
Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle
With decoration of ideal grace;

A dignity, a smoothness, like the works
Of Grecian art, and purest poesy.

A precious treasure had I long possessed,
A little yellow, canvas-covered book,
A slender abstract of the Arabian tales;
And, from companions in a new abode,
When first I learnt, that this dear prize of mine
Was but a block hewn from a mighty quarry—
That there were four large volumes, laden all
With kindred matter, 'twas to me, in truth,
A promise scarcely earthly. Instantly,
With one not richer than myself, I made
A covenant that each should lay aside
The moneys he possessed, and hoard up more,
Till our joint savings had amassed enough
To make this book our own. Through several months,
In spite of all temptation, we preserved
Religiously that vow; but firmness failed,
Nor were we ever masters of our wish.

And when thereafter to my father's house
The holidays returned me, there to find
That golden store of books which I had left,
What joy was mine! How often in the course

Of those glad respites, though a soft west wind
Ruffled the waters to the angler's wish
For a whole day together, have I lain
Down by thy side, O Derwent! murmuring stream,
On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun,
And there have read, devouring as I read,
Defrauding the day's glory, desperate!
Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach,
Such as an idler deals with in his shame,
I to the sport betook myself again.

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
It comes, to works of unreproved delight,
And tendency benign, directing those
Who care not, know not, think not what they do.
The tales that charm away the wakeful night
In Araby, romances; legends penned
For solace by dim light of monkish lamps;
Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised
By youthful squires; adventures endless, spun
By the dismantled warrior in old age,
Out of the bowels of those very schemes
In which his youth did first extravagate;
These spread like day, and something in the shape

Of these will live till man shall be no more.
Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,
And *they must* have their food. Our childhood sits,
Our simple childhood sits upon a throne
That hath more power than all the elements.
I guess not what this tells of Being past,
Nor what it augurs of the life to come :
But so it is, and, in that dubious hour,
That twilight when we first begin to see
This dawning earth, to recognise, expect,
And in the long probation that ensues,
The time of trial, ere we learn to live
In reconcilement with our stinted powers ;
To endure this state of meagre vassalage,
Unwilling to forego, confess, submit,
Uneasy and unsettled, yoke-fellows
To custom, mettlesome, and not yet tamed
And humbled down ; oh ! then we feel, we feel,
We know where we have friends. Ye dreamers, then,
Forgers of daring tales ! we bless you then,
Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the ape
Philosophy will call you : *then* we feel
With what, and how great might ye are in league,
Who make our wish, our power, our thought a deed,
An empire, a possession,—ye whom time

And seasons serve ; all Faculties to whom
Earth crouches, the elements are potter's clay,
Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,
Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

Relinquishing this lofty eminence
For ground, though humbler, not the less a tract
Of the same isthmus, which our spirits cross
In progress from their native continent
To earth and human life, the Song might dwell
On that delightful time of growing youth,
When craving for the marvellous gives way
To strengthening love for things that we have seen;
When sober truth and steady sympathies,
Offered to notice by less daring pens,
Take firmer hold of us, and words themselves
Move us with conscious pleasure.
I am sad
At thought of raptures now for ever flown ;
Almost to tears I sometimes could be sad
To think of, to read over, many a page,
Poems withal of name, which at that time
Did never fail to entrance me, and are now
Dead in my eyes, dead as a theatre
Fresh emptied of spectators. Twice five years

Or less I might have seen, when first my mind
With conscious pleasure opened to the charm
Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet
For their own *sakes*, a passion, and a power;
And phrases pleased me chosen for delight,
For pomp, or love. Oft, in the public roads
Yet unfrequented, while the morning light
Was yellowing the hill tops, I went abroad
With a dear friend, and for the better part
Of two delightful hours we strolled along
By the still borders of the misty lake,
Repeating favourite verses with one voice,
Or conning more, as happy as the birds
That round us chaunted. Well might we be glad,
Lifted above the ground by airy fancies,
More bright than madness or the dreams of wine;
And, though full oft the objects of our love
Were false, and in their splendour overwrought,
Yet was there surely then no vulgar power
Working within us,—nothing less, in truth,
Than that most noble attribute of man,
Though yet untutored and inordinate,
That wish for something loftier, more adorned,
Than is the common aspect, daily garb,
Of human life. What wonder, then, if sounds

Of exultation echoed through the groves!
For, images, and sentiments, and words,
And everything encountered or pursued
In that delicious world of poesy,
Kept holiday, a never-ending show,
With music, incense, festival, and flowers!

Here must we pause: this only let me add,
From heart-experience, and in humblest sense
Of modesty, that he, who in his youth
A daily wanderer among woods and fields
With living Nature hath been intimate,
Not only in that raw unpractised time
Is stirred to extasy, as others are,
By glittering verse; but further, doth receive,
In measure only dealt out to himself,
Knowledge and increase of enduring joy
From the great Nature that exists in works
Of mighty Poets. Visionary power
Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
Embodied in the mystery of words:
There, darkness makes abode, and all the host
Of shadowy things work endless changes,—there,
As in a mansion like their proper home,
Even forms and substances are circumfused

By that transparent veil with light divine,
And, through the turnings intricate of verse,
Present themselves as objects recognised,
In flashes, and with glory not their own.

BOOK VI

CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

BOOK SIXTH

CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

The leaves were fading when to Esthwaite's banks
And the simplicities of cottage life
I bade farewell; and, one among the youth
Who, summoned by that season, reunite
As scattered birds troop to the fowler's lure,
Went back to Granta's cloisters, not so prompt
Or eager, though as gay and undepressed
In mind, as when I thence had taken flight
A few short months before. I turned my face
Without repining from the coves and heights
Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern;
Quitted, not loth, the mild magnificence
Of calmer lakes and louder streams; and you,
Frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland,
You and your not unwelcome days of mirth,

Relinquished, and your nights of revelry,
And in my own unlovely cell sate down
In lightsome mood—such privilege has youth
That cannot take long leave of pleasant thoughts.

The bonds of indolent society
Relaxing in their hold, henceforth I lived
More to myself. Two winters may be passed
Without a separate notice: many books
Were skimmed, devoured, or studiously perused,
But with no settled plan. I was detached
Internally from academic cares;
Yet independent study seemed a course
Of hardy disobedience toward friends
And kindred, proud rebellion and unkind.
This spurious virtue, rather let it bear
A name it now deserves, this cowardice,
Gave treacherous sanction to that over-love
Of freedom which encouraged me to turn
From regulations even of my own
As from restraints and bonds. Yet who can tell—
Who knows what thus may have been gained, both then
And at a later season, or preserved;
What love of nature, what original strength
Of contemplation, what intuitive truths,

The deepest and the best, what keen research,
Unbiassed, unbewildered, and unawed?

The Poet's soul was with me at that time;
Sweet meditations, the still overflow
Of present happiness, while future years
Lacked not anticipations, tender dreams,
No few of which have since been realised;
And some remain, hopes for my future life.
Four years and thirty, told this very week,
Have I been now a sojourner on earth,
By sorrow not unsmitten; yet for me
Life's morning radiance hath not left the hills,
Her dew is on the flowers. Those were the days
Which also first emboldened me to trust
With firmness, hitherto but lightly touched
By such a daring thought, that I might leave
Some monument behind me which pure hearts
Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness,
Maintained even by the very name and thought
Of printed books and authorship, began
To melt away; and further, the dread awe
Of mighty names was softened down and seemed
Approachable, admitting fellowship
Of modest sympathy. Such aspect now,

Though not familiarly, my mind put on,
Content to observe, to achieve, and to enjoy.

All winter long, whenever free to choose,
Did I by night frequent the College groves
And tributary walks; the last, and oft
The only one, who had been lingering there
Through hours of silence, till the porter's bell,
A punctual follower on the stroke of nine,
Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice,
Inexorable summons! Lofty elms,
Inviting shades of opportune recess,
Bestowed composure on a neighbourhood
Unpeaceful in itself. A single tree
With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed,
Grew there; an ash which Winter for himself
Decked as in pride, and with outlandish grace:
Up from the ground, and almost to the top,
The trunk and every master branch were green
With clustering ivy, and the lightsome twigs
And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds
That hung in yellow tassels, while the air
Stirred them, not voiceless. Often have I stood
Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree
Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere

Of magic fiction, verse of mine perchance
May never tread; but scarcely Spenser's self
Could have more tranquil visions in his youth,
Or could more bright appearances create
Of human forms with superhuman powers,
Than I beheld loitering on calm clear nights
Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.

On the vague reading of a truant youth
'Twere idle to descant. My inner judgment
Not seldom differed from my taste in books,
As if it appertained to another mind,
And yet the books which then I valued most
Are dearest to me *now*; for, having scanned,
Not heedlessly, the laws, and watched the forms
Of Nature, in that knowledge I possessed
A standard, often usefully applied,
Even when unconsciously, to things removed
From a familiar sympathy.—In fine,
I was a better judge of thoughts than words,
Misled in estimating words, not only
By common inexperience of youth,
But by the trade in classic niceties,
The dangerous craft of culling term and phrase
From languages that want the living voice

To carry meaning to the natural heart;
To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
What reason, what simplicity and sense.

Yet may we not entirely overlook
The pleasure gathered from the rudiments
Of geometric science. Though advanced
In these inquiries, with regret I speak,
No farther than the threshold, there I found
Both elevation and composed delight:
With Indian awe and wonder, ignorance pleased
With its own struggles, did I meditate
On the relation those abstractions bear
To Nature's laws, and by what process led,
Those immaterial agents bowed their heads
Duly to serve the mind of earth-born man;
From star to star, from kindred sphere to sphere,
From system on to system without end.

More frequently from the same source I drew
A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense
Of permanent and universal sway,
And paramount belief; there, recognised
A type, for finite natures, of the one
Supreme Existence, the surpassing life

Which—to the boundaries of space and time,
Of melancholy space and doleful time,
Superior, and incapable of change,
Nor touched by welterings of passion—is,
And hath the name of, God. Transcendent peace
And silence did await upon these thoughts
That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

'Tis told by one whom stormy waters threw,
With fellow-sufferers by the shipwreck spared,
Upon a desert coast, that having brought
To land a single volume, saved by chance,
A treatise of Geometry, he wont,
Although of food and clothing destitute,
And beyond common wretchedness depressed,
To part from company and take this book
(Then first a self-taught pupil in its truths)
To spots remote, and draw his diagrams
With a long staff upon the sand, and thus
Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost
Forget his feeling: so (if like effect
From the same cause produced, 'mid outward things
So different, may rightly be compared),
So was it then with me, and so will be
With Poets ever. Mighty is the charm

Of those abstractions to a mind beset
With images, and haunted by herself,
And specially delightful unto me
Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
So gracefully ; even then when it appeared
Not more than a mere plaything, or a toy
To sense embodied : not the thing it is
In verity, an independent world,
Created out of pure intelligence.

Such dispositions then were mine unearned
By aught, I fear, of genuine desert—
Mine, through heaven's grace and inborn aptitudes.
And not to leave the story of that time
Imperfect, with these habits must be joined,
Moods melancholy, fits of spleen, that loved
A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
The twilight more than dawn, autumn than spring ;
A treasured and luxurious gloom of choice
And inclination mainly, and the mere
Redundancy of youth's contentedness.
—To time thus spent, add multitudes of hours
Pilfered away, by what the Bard who sang
Of the Enchanter Indolence hath called
" Good-natured lounging, " and behold a map

Of my collegiate life—far less intense
Than duty called for, or, without regard
To duty, *might* have sprung up of itself
By change of accidents, or even, to speak
Without unkindness, in another place.
Yet why take refuge in that plea?—the fault,
This I repeat, was mine; mine be the blame.

In summer, making quest for works of art,
Or scenes renowned for beauty, I explored
That streamlet whose blue current works its way
Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks;
Pried into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts
Of my own native region, and was blest
Between these sundry wanderings with a joy
Above all joys, that seemed another morn
Risen on mid noon; blest with the presence, Friend!
Of that sole Sister, her who hath been long
Dear to thee also, thy true friend and mine,
Now, after separation desolate,
Restored to me—such absence that she seemed
A gift then first bestowed. The varied banks
Of Emont, hitherto unnamed in song,
And that monastic castle, 'mid tall trees,
Low-standing by the margin of the stream,

A mansion visited (as fame reports)
By Sidney, where, in sight of our Helvellyn,
Or stormy Cross-fell, snatches he might pen
Of his Arcadia, by fraternal love
Inspired ;—that river and those mouldering towers
Have seen us side by side, when, having clomb
The darksome windings of a broken stair,
And crept along a ridge of fractured wall,
Not without trembling, we in safety looked
Forth, through some Gothic window's open space,
And gathered with one mind a rich reward
From the far-stretching landscape, by the light
Of morning beautified, or purple eve ;
Or, not less pleased, lay on some turret's head,
Catching from tufts of grass and hare-bell flowers
Their faintest whisper to the passing breeze,
Given out while mid-day heat oppressed the plains.

Another maid there was, who also shed
A gladness o'er that season, then to me,
By her exulting outside look of youth
And placid under-countenance, first endeared ;
That other spirit, Coleridge ! who is now
So near to us, that meek confiding heart,
So reverenced by us both. O'er paths and fields

In all that neighbourhood, through narrow lanes
Of eglantine, and through the shady woods,
And o'er the Border Beacon, and the waste
Of naked pools, and common crags that lay
Exposed on the bare fell, were scattered love,
The spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam.
O Friend! we had not seen thee at that time,
And yet a power is on me, and a strong
Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there.
Far art thou wandered now in search of health
And milder breezes,—melancholy lot!
But thou art with us, with us in the past,
The present, with us in the times to come.
There is no grief, no sorrow, no despair,
No languor, no dejection, no dismay,
No absence scarcely can there be, for those
Who love as we do. Speed thee well! divide
With us thy pleasure; thy returning strength,
Receive it daily as a joy of ours;
Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift
Of gales Etesian or of tender thoughts.

I, too, have been a wanderer; but, alas!
How different the fate of different men.
Though mutually unknown, yea nursed and reared

As if in several elements, we were framed
To bend at last to the same discipline,
Predestined, if two beings ever were,
To seek the same delights, and have one health,
One happiness. Throughout this narrative,
Else sooner ended, I have borne in mind
For whom it registers the birth, and marks the growth,
Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth,
And joyous loves, that hallow innocent days
Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields,
And groves I speak to thee, my Friend! to thee,
Who, yet a liveried schoolboy, in the depths
Of the huge city, on the leaded roof
Of that wide edifice, thy school and home,
Wert used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
Moving in heaven; or, of that pleasure tired,
To shut thine eyes, and by internal light
See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream,
Far distant, thus beheld from year to year
Of a long exile. Nor could I forget,
In this late portion of my argument,
That scarcely, as my term of pupilage
Ceased, had I left those academic bowers
When thou wert thither guided. From the heart
Of London, and from cloisters there, thou camest,

And didst sit down in temperance and peace,
A rigorous student. What a stormy course
Then followed. Oh! it is a pang that calls
For utterance, to think what easy change
Of circumstances might to thee have spared
A world of pain, ripened a thousand hopes,
For ever withered. Through this retrospect
Of my collegiate life I still have had
Thy after-sojourn in the self-same place
Present before my eyes, have played with times
And accidents as children do with cards,
Or as a man, who, when his house is built,
A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still,
As impotent fancy prompts, by his fireside,
Rebuild it to his liking. I have thought
Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence,
And all the strength and plumage of thy youth,
Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse
Among the schoolmen, and Platonic forms
Of wild ideal pageantry, shaped out
From things well-matched or ill, and words for things,
The self-created sustenance of a mind
Debarred from Nature's living images,
Compelled to be a life unto herself,
And unrelentingly possessed by thirst

Of greatness, love, and beauty. Not alone,
Ah! surely not in singleness of heart
Should I have seen the light of evening fade
From smooth Cam's silent waters: had we met,
Even at that early time, needs must I trust
In the belief, that my maturer age,
My calmer habits, and more steady voice,
Would with an influence benign have soothed,
Or chased away, the airy wretchedness
That battened on thy youth. But thou hast trod
A march of glory, which doth put to shame
These vain regrets; health suffers in thee, else
Such grief for thee would be the weakest thought
That ever harboured in the breast of man.

A passing word erewhile did lightly touch
On wanderings of my own, that now embraced
With livelier hope a region wider far.

When the third summer freed us from restraint,
A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer,
Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,
And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side,
Bound to the distant Alps. A hardy slight
Did this unprecedented course imply

Of college studies and their set rewards;
Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me
Without uneasy forethought of the pain,
The censures, and ill-omening of those
To whom my worldly interests were dear.
But Nature then was sovereign in my mind,
And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,
Had given a charter to irregular hopes.
In any age of uneventful calm
Among the nations, surely would my heart
Have been possessed by similar desire;
But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.

Lightly equipped, and but a few brief looks
Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore
From the receding vessel's deck, we chanced
To land at Calais on the very eve
Of that great federal day; and there we saw,
In a mean city, and among a few,
How bright a face is worn when joy of one
Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence
We held our way, direct through hamlets, towns,
Gaudy with reliques of that festival,

Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs,
And window-garlands. On the public roads,
And, once, three days successively, through paths
By which our toilsome journey was abridged,
Among sequestered villages we walked
And found benevolence and blessedness
Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring
Hath left no corner of the land untouched:
Where elms for many and many a league in files
With their thin umbrage, on the stately roads
Of that great kingdom, rustled o'er our heads,
For ever near us as we paced along:
How sweet at such a time, with such delight
On every side, in prime of youthful strength,
To feed a Poet's tender melancholy
And fond conceit of sadness, with the sound
Of undulations varying as might please [once,
The wind that swayed them; once, and more than
Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw
Dances of liberty, and, in late hours
Of darkness, dances in the open air.
Deftly prolonged, though grey-haired lookers on
Might waste their breath in chiding.
Under hills—
The vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy,

Upon the bosom of the gentle Saone
We glided forward with the flowing stream.
Swift Rhone! thou wert the *wings* on which we cut
A winding passage with majestic ease
Between thy lofty rocks. Enchanting show
Those woods and farms and orchards did present,
And single cottages and lurking towns,
Reach after reach, succession without end
Of deep and stately vales! A lonely pair
Of strangers, till day closed, we sailed along,
Clustered together with a merry crowd
Of those emancipated, a blithe host
Of travellers, chiefly delegates returning
From the great spousals newly solemnised
At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven.
Like bees they swarmed, gaudy and gay as bees;
Some vapoured in the unruliness of joy,
And with their swords flourished as if to fight
The saucy air. In this proud company
We landed—took with them our evening meal,
Guests welcome almost as the angels were
To Abraham of old. The supper done,
With flowing cups elate and happy thoughts
We rose at signal given, and formed a ring
And, hand in hand, danced round and round the board;

All hearts were open, every tongue was loud
With amity and glee ; we bore a name
Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,
And hospitably did they give us hail,
As their forerunners in a glorious course ;
And round and round the board we danced again.
With these blithe friends our voyage we renewed
At early dawn. The monastery bells
Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears ;
The rapid river flowing without noise,
And each uprising or receding spire
Spake with a sense of peace, at intervals
Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew
By whom we were encompassed. Taking leave
Of this glad throng, foot-travellers side by side,
Measuring our steps in quiet, we pursued
Our journey, and ere twice the sun had set
Beheld the Convent of Chartreuse, and there
Rested within an awful *solitude :*
Yes, for even then no other than a place
Of soul-affecting *solitude* appeared
That far-famed region, though our eyes had seen,
As toward the sacred mansion we advanced,
Arms flashing, and a military glare
Of riotous men commissioned to expel

The blameless inmates, and belike subvert
That frame of social being, which so long
Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things
In silence visible and perpetual calm.
—"Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands!"—The voice
Was Nature's, uttered from her Alpine throne;
I heard it then and seem to hear it now—
"Your impious work forbear, perish what may,
Let this one temple last, be this one spot
Of earth devoted to eternity!"
She ceased to speak, but while St. Bruno's pines
Waved their dark tops, not silent as they waved,
And while below, along their several beds,
Murmured the sister streams of Life and Death,
Thus by conflicting passions pressed, my heart
Responded; "Honour to the patriot's zeal!
Glory and hope to new-born Liberty!
Hail to the mighty projects of the time!
Discerning sword that Justice wields, do thou
Go forth and prosper; and, ye purging fires,
Up to the loftiest towers of Pride ascend,
Fanned by the breath of angry Providence.
But oh! if Past and Future be the wings
On whose support harmoniously conjoined
Moves the great spirit of human knowledge, spare

These courts of mystery, where a step advanced
Between the portals of the shadowy rocks
Leaves far behind life's treacherous vanities,
For penitential tears and trembling hopes
Exchanged—to equalise in God's pure sight
Monarch and peasant : be the house redeemed
With its unworldly votaries, for the sake
Of conquest over sense, hourly achieved
Through faith and meditative reason, resting
Upon the word of heaven-imparted truth,
Calmly triumphant ; and for humbler claim
Of that imaginative impulse sent
From these majestic floods, yon shining cliffs,
The untransmuted shapes of many worlds,
Cerulean ether's pure inhabitants,
These forests unapproachable by death,
That shall endure as long as man endures,
To think, to hope, to worship, and to feel,
To struggle, to be lost within himself
In trepidation, from the blank abyss
To look with bodily eyes, and be consoled."
Not seldom since that moment have I wished
That thou, O Friend ! the trouble or the calm
Hadst shared, when, from profane regards apart,
In sympathetic reverence we trod

The floors of those dim cloisters, till that hour,
From their foundation, strangers to the presence
Of unrestricted and unthinking man.
Abroad, how cheeringly the sunshine lay
Upon the open lawns! Vallombre's groves
Entering, we fed the soul with darkness; thence
Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld,
In different quarters of the bending sky,
The cross of Jesus stand erect, as if
Hands of angelic powers had fixed it there,
Memorial reverenced by a thousand storms;
Yet then, from the undiscriminating sweep
And rage of one State-whirlwind, insecure.

'Tis not my present purpose to retrace
That variegated journey step by step.
A march it was of military speed,
And Earth did change her images and forms
Before us, fast as clouds are changed in heaven.
Day after day, up early and down late,
From hill to vale we dropped, from vale to hill
Mounted—from province on to province swept,
Keen hunters in a chase of fourteen weeks,
Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship
Upon the stretch, when winds are blowing fair:

Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life,
Enticing valleys, greeted them and left
Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam
Of salutation were not passed away,
Oh! sorrow for the youth who could have seen
Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised
To patriarchal dignity of mind,
And pure simplicity of wish and will,
Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man, [round
Pleased (though to hardship born, and compassed
With danger, varying as the seasons change),
Pleased with his daily task, or, if not pleased,
Contented, from the moment that the dawn
(Ah! surely not without attendant gleams
Of soul-illumination) calls him forth
To industry, by glistenings flung on rocks,
Whose evening shadows lead him to repose.

Well might a stranger look with bounding heart
Down on a green recess, the first I saw
Of those deep haunts, an aboriginal vale,
Quiet and lorded over and possessed
By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents
Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns
And by the river side.

That very day,
From a bare ridge we also first beheld
Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
To have a soulless image on the eye
That had usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be. The wondrous Vale
Of Chamouny stretched far below, and soon
With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice,
A motionless array of mighty waves,
Five rivers broad and vast, made rich amends,
And reconciled us to realities;
There small birds warble from the leafy trees,
The eagle soars high in the element,
There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,
While Winter like a well-tamed lion walks,
Descending from the mountain to make sport
Among the cottages by beds of flowers.

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,
Or heard, was fitted to our unripe state
Of intellect and heart. With such a book
Before our eyes, we could not choose but read
Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain
And universal reason of mankind,

The truths of young and old. Nor, side by side
Pacing, two social pilgrims, or alone
Each with his humour, could we fail to abound
In dreams and fictions, pensively composed:
Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,
And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,
And sober posies of funereal flowers,
Gathered among those solitudes sublime
From formal gardens of the lady Sorrow,
Did sweeten many a meditative hour.

Yet still in me with those soft luxuries
Mixed something of stern mood, an under-thirst
Of vigour seldom utterly allayed.
And from that source how different a sadness
Would issue, let one incident make known.
When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb
Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road,
Following a band of muleteers, we reached
A halting-place, where all together took
Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our guide,
Leaving us at the board; awhile we lingered,
Then paced the beaten downward way that led
Right to a rough stream's edge, and there broke off;
The only track now visible was one

That from the torrent's further brink held forth
Conspicuous invitation to ascend
A lofty mountain. After brief delay
Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took,
And clomb with eagerness, till anxious fears
Intruded, for we failed to overtake
Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
While every moment added doubt to doubt,
A peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned
That to the spot which had perplexed us first
We must descend, and there should find the road,
Which in the stony channel of the stream
Lay a few steps, and then along its banks ;
And, that our future course, all plain to sight,
Was downwards, with the current of that stream.
Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear,
For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,
We questioned him again, and yet again ;
But every word that from the peasant's lips
Came in reply, translated by our feelings,
Ended in this,—*that we had crossed the Alps*.

Imagination—here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech,
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss

Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost;
Halted without an effort to break through;
But to my conscious soul I now can say—
"I recognise thy glory:" in such strength
Of usurpation, when the light of sense
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
There harbours; whether we be young or old,
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be.
Under such banners militant, the soul
Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils
That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts
That are their own perfection and reward,
Strong in herself and in beatitude
That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile
Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds
To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain.

The melancholy slackening that ensued
Upon those tidings by the peasant given

Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,
And, with the half-shaped road which we had missed,
Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road
Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy strait,
And with them did we journey several hours
At a slow pace. The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent at every turn
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

That night our lodging was a house that stood
Alone within the valley, at a point

Where, tumbling from aloft, a torrent swelled
The rapid stream whose margin we had trod;
A dreary mansion, large beyond all need,
With high and spacious rooms, deafened and stunned
By noise of waters, making innocent sleep
Lie melancholy among weary bones.

Uprisen betimes, our journey we renewed,
Led by the stream, ere noon-day magnified
Into a lordly river, broad and deep,
Dimpling along in silent majesty,
With mountains for its neighbours, and in view
Of distant mountains and their snowy tops,
And thus proceeding to Locarno's Lake,
Fit resting-place for such a visitant.
Locarno! spreading out in width like Heaven.
How dost thou cleave to the poetic heart,
Bask in the sunshine of the memory;
And Como! thou, a treasure whom the earth
Keeps to herself, confined as in a depth
Of Abyssinian privacy. I spake
Of thee, thy chestnut woods, and garden plots
Of Indian corn tended by dark-eyed maids;
Thy lofty steeps, and pathways roofed with vines,
Winding from house to house, from town to town,

Sole link that binds them to each other; walks,
League after league, and cloistral avenues,
Where silence dwells if music be not there:
While yet a youth undisciplined in verse,
Through fond ambition of that hour, I strove
To chant your praise; nor can approach you now
Ungreeted by a more melodious Song,
Where tones of Nature smoothed by learned Art
May flow in lasting current. Like a breeze
Or sunbeam over your domain I passed
In motion without pause; but ye have left
Your beauty with me, a serene accord
Of forms and colours, passive, yet endowed
In their submissiveness with power as sweet
And gracious, almost might I dare to say,
As virtue is, or goodness; sweet as love,
Or the remembrance of a generous deed,
Or mildest visitations of pure thought,
When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked
Religiously, in silent blessedness;
Sweet as this last herself, for such it is.

With those delightful pathways we advanced,
For two days' space, in presence of the Lake,
That, stretching far among the Alps, assumed

A character more stern. The second night,
From sleep awakened, and misled by sound
Of the church clock telling the hours with strokes
Whose import then we had not learned, we rose
By moonlight, doubting not that day was nigh,
And that meanwhile, by no uncertain path,
Along the winding margin of the lake,
Led, as before, we should behold the scene
Hushed in profound repose. We left the town
Of Gravedona with this hope; but soon
Were lost, bewildered among woods immense,
And on a rock sate down, to wait for day.
An open place it was, and overlooked,
From high, the sullen water far beneath,
On which a dull red image of the moon
Lay bedded, changing oftentimes its form
Like an uneasy snake. From hour to hour
We sate and sate, wondering, as if the night
Had been ensnared by witchcraft. On the rock
At last we stretched our weary limbs for sleep,
But *could not* sleep, tormented by the stings
Of insects, which, with noise like that of noon,
Filled all the woods; the cry of unknown birds;
The mountains more by blackness visible
And their own size, than any outward light;

The breathless wilderness of clouds; the clock
That told, with unintelligible voice,
The widely parted hours; the noise of streams,
And sometimes rustling motions nigh at hand,
That did not leave us free from personal fear;
And, lastly, the withdrawing moon, that set
Before us, while she still was high in heaven;—
These were our food; and such a summer's night
Followed that pair of golden days that shed
On Como's Lake, and all that round it lay,
Their fairest, softest, happiest influence.

But here I must break off, and bid farewell
To days, each offering some new sight, or fraught
With some untried adventure, in a course
Prolonged till sprinklings of autumnal snow
Checked our unwearied steps. Let this alone
Be mentioned as a parting word, that not
In hollow exultation, dealing out
Hyperboles of praise comparative;
Not rich one moment to be poor for ever;
Not prostrate, overborne, as if the mind
Herself were nothing, a mere pensioner
On outward forms—did we in presence stand
Of that magnificent region. On the front

Of this whole Song is written that my heart
Must, in such Temple, needs have offered up
A different worship. Finally, whate'er
I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream
That flowed into a kindred stream; a gale,
Confederate with the current of the soul,
To speed my voyage; every sound or sight,
In its degree of power, administered
To grandeur or to tenderness,—to the one
Directly, but to tender thoughts by means
Less often instantaneous in effect;
Led me to these by paths that, in the main,
Were more circuitous, but not less sure
Duly to reach the point marked out by Heaven.

Oh, most beloved Friend! a glorious time,
A happy time that was; triumphant looks
Were then the common language of all eyes;
As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed
Their great expectancy: the fife of war
Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
A black-bird's whistle in a budding grove.
We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
Of their near neighbours; and, when shortening fast
Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,

We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret
For battle in the cause of Liberty.
A stripling, scarcely of the household then
Of social life, I looked upon these things
As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt,
Was touched, but with no intimate concern;
I seemed to move along them, as a bird
Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues
Its sport, or feeds in its proper element;
I wanted not that joy, I did not need
Such help; the ever-living universe,
Turn where I might, was opening out its glories,
And the independent spirit of pure youth
Called forth, at every season, new delights
Spread round my steps like sunshine o'ergreen fields.

BOOK VII

RESIDENCE IN LONDON

BOOK SEVENTH

RESIDENCE IN LONDON

Six changeful years have vanished since I first
Poured out (saluted by that quickening breeze
Which met me issuing from the City's walls)
A glad preamble to this Verse: I sang
Aloud, with fervour irresistible
Of short-lived transport, like a torrent bursting,
From a black thunder-cloud, down Scafell's side
To rush and disappear. But soon broke forth
(So willed the Muse) a less impetuous stream,
That flowed awhile with unabating strength,
Then stopped for years; not audible again
Before last primrose-time. Belovèd Friend!
The assurance which then cheered some heavy thoughts
On thy departure to a foreign land
Has failed; too slowly moves the promised work.

Through the whole summer have I been at rest,
Partly from voluntary holiday,
And part through outward hindrance. But I heard,
After the hour of sunset yester-even,
Sitting within doors between light and dark,
A choir of redbreasts gathered somewhere near
My threshold,—minstrels from the distant woods
Sent in on Winter's service, to announce,
With preparation artful and benign,
That the rough lord had left the surly North
On his accustomed journey. The delight,
Due to this timely notice, unawares
Smote me, and, listening, I in whispers said,
"Ye heartsome Choristers, ye and I will be
Associates, and, unscared by blustering winds,
Will chant together." Thereafter, as the shades
Of twilight deepened, going forth, I spied
A glow-worm underneath a dusky plume
Or canopy of yet unwithered fern,
Clear-shining, like a hermit's taper seen
Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here
No less than sound had done before; the child
Of Summer, lingering, shining, by herself,
The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills,
Seemed sent on the same errand with the choir

Of Winter that had warbled at my door,
And the whole year breathed tenderness and love.

The last night's genial feeling overflowed
Upon this morning, and my favourite grove,
Tossing in sunshine its dark boughs aloft,
As if to make the strong wind visible,
Wakes in me agitations like its own,
A spirit friendly to the Poet's task,
Which we will now resume with lively hope,
Nor checked by aught of tamer argument
That lies before us, needful to be told.

Returned from that excursion, soon I bade
Farewell for ever to those sheltered seats
Of gownèd students, quitted hall and bower,
And every comfort of that privileged ground,
Well pleased to pitch a vagrant tent among
The unfenced regions of society.

Yet, undetermined to what course of life
I should adhere, and seeming to possess
A little space of intermediate time
At full command, to London first I turned,
In no disturbance of excessive hope,

By personal ambition unenslaved,
Frugal as there was need, and, though self-willed,
From dangerous passions free. Three years had flown
Since I had felt in heart and soul the shock
Of the huge town's first presence, and had paced
Her endless streets, a transient visitant:
Now, fixed amid that concourse of mankind
Where Pleasure whirls about incessantly,
And life and labour seem but one, I filled
An idler's place; an idler well content
To have a house (what matter for a home?)
That owned him; living cheerfully abroad
With unchecked fancy ever on the stir,
And all my young affections out of doors.

There was a time when whatsoe'er is feigned
Of airy palaces, and gardens built
By Genii of romance; or hath in grave
Authentic history been set forth of Rome,
Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis;
Or given upon report by pilgrim friars,
Of golden cities ten months' journey deep
Among Tartarian wilds—fell short, far short,
Of what my fond simplicity believed
And thought of London—held me by a chain

Less strong of wonder and obscure delight.
Whether the bolt of childhood's Fancy shot
For me beyond its ordinary mark,
'Twere vain to ask; but in our flock of boys
Was One, a cripple from his birth, whom chance
Summoned from school to London; fortunate
And envied traveller! When the Boy returned,
After short absence, curiously I scanned
His mien and person, nor was free, in sooth,
From disappointment, not to find some change
In look and air, from that new region brought,
As if from Fairy-land. Much I questioned him;
And every word he uttered, on my ears
Fell flatter than a cagèd parrot's note,
That answers unexpectedly awry,
And mocks the prompter's listening. Marvellous things
Had vanity (quick Spirit that appears
Almost as deeply seated and as strong
In a Child's heart as fear itself) conceived
For my enjoyment. Would that I could now
Recal what then I pictured to myself,
Of mitred Prelates, Lords in ermine clad,
The King, and the King's Palace, and, not last,
Nor least, Heaven bless him! the renowned Lord Mayor:
Dreams not unlike to those which once begat

A change of purpose in young Whittington,
When he, a friendless and a drooping boy,
Sate on a stone, and heard the bells speak out
Articulate music. Above all, one thought
Baffled my understanding: how men lived
Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still
Strangers, not knowing each the other's name.

O wond'rous power of words, by simple faith
Licensed to take the meaning that we love!
Vauxhall and Ranelagh! I then had heard
Of your green groves, and wilderness of lamps
Dimming the stars, and fireworks magical,
And gorgeous ladies, under splendid domes,
Floating in dance, or warbling high in air
The songs of spirits! Nor had Fancy fed
With less delight upon that other class
Of marvels, broad-day wonders permanent:
The River proudly bridged; the dizzy top
And Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's! the tombs
Of Westminster; the Giants of Guildhall;
Bedlam, and those carved maniacs at the gates,
Perpetually recumbent; Statues—man,
And the horse under him—in guilded pomp
Adorning flowery gardens, 'mid vast squares;

The Monument, and that Chamber of the Tower
Where England's sovereigns sit in long array,
Their steeds bestriding,—every mimic shape
Cased in the gleaming mail the monarch wore,
Whether for gorgeous tournament addressed,
Or life or death upon the battle-field.
Those bold imaginations in due time
Had vanished, leaving others in their stead:
And now I looked upon the living scene;
Familiarly perused it; oftentimes,
In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
Paid to the object by prescriptive right.

Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain
Of a too busy world! Before me flow,
Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes—
With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe—
On strangers, of all ages; the quick dance
Of colours, lights, and forms; the deafening din;
The comers and the goers face to face,
Face after face; the string of dazzling wares,
Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
And all the tradesman's honours overhead:

Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page,
With letters huge inscribed from top to toe,
Stationed above the door, like guardian saints ;
There, allegoric shapes, female or male,
Or physiognomies of real men,
Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea,
Boyle, Shakspeare, Newton, or the attractive head
Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.

Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length,
Escaped as from an enemy, we turn
Abruptly into some sequestered nook,
Still as a sheltered place when winds blow loud !
At leisure, thence, through tracts of thin resort,
And sights and sounds that come at intervals,
We take our way. A raree-show is here,
With children gathered round ; another street
Presents a company of dancing dogs,
Or dromedary, with an antic pair
Of monkeys on his back ; a minstrel band
Of Savoyards ; or, single and alone,
An English ballad-singer. Private courts,
Gloomy as coffins, and unsightly lanes
Thrilled by some female vendor's scream, belike
The very shrillest of all London cries,

May then entangle our impatient steps;
Conducted through those labyrinths, unawares,
To privileged regions and inviolate,
Where from their airy lodges studious lawyers
Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green.

Thence back into the throng, until we reach,
Following the tide that slackens by degrees,
Some half-frequented scene, where wider streets
Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.
Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls;
Advertisements, of giant-size, from high
Press forward, in all colours, on the sight;
These, bold in conscious merit, lower down;
That, fronted with a most imposing word,
Is, peradventure, one in masquerade.
As on the broadening causeway we advance,
Behold, turned upwards, a face hard and strong
In lineaments, and red with over-toil.
'Tis one encountered here and everywhere;
A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,
And stumping on his arms. In sailor's garb
Another lies at length, beside a range
Of well-formed characters, with chalk inscribed
Upon the smooth flat stones: the Nurse is here,

The Bachelor, that loves to sun himself,
The military Idler, and the Dame,
That field-ward takes her walk with decent steps.

Now homeward through the thickening hubbub,
See, among less distinguishable shapes, [where
The begging scavenger, with hat in hand;
The Italian, as he thrids his way with care,
Steadying, far-seen, a frame of images
Upon his head; with basket at his breast
The Jew; the stately and slow-moving Turk,
With freight of slippers piled beneath his arm!

Enough;—the mighty concourse I surveyed
With no unthinking mind, well pleased to note
Among the crowd all specimens of man,
Through all the colours which the sun bestows,
And every character of form and face:
The Swede, the Russian; from the genial south,
The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote
America, the Hunter-Indian; Moors,
Malays, Lascars, the Tartar, the Chinese,
And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns.

At leisure, then, I viewed, from day to day,

The spectacles within doors,—birds and beasts
Of every nature, and strange plants convened
From every clime ; and, next, those sights that ape
The absolute presence of reality,
Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,
And what earth is, and what she has to shew.
I do not here allude to subtlest craft,
By means refined attaining purest ends,
But imitations, fondly made in plain
Confession of man's weakness and his loves.
Whether the Painter, whose ambitious skill
Submits to nothing less than taking in
A whole horizon's circuit, do with power,
Like that of angels or commissioned spirits,
Fix us upon some lofty pinnacle,
Or in a ship on waters, with a world
Of life, and life-like mockery beneath,
Above, behind, far stretching and before ;
Or more mechanic artist represent
By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
From blended colours also borrowing help,
Some miniature of famous spots or things,—
St. Peter's Church ; or, more aspiring aim,
In microscopic vision, Rome herself ;
Or, haply, some choice rural haunt,—the Falls

Of Tivoli ; and, high upon that steep,
The Sibyl's mouldering Temple ! every tree,
Villa, or cottage, lurking among rocks
Throughout the landscape ; tuft, stone scratch minute—
All that the traveller sees when he is there.

And to these exhibitions, mute and still,
Others of wider scope, where living men,
Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes,
Diversified the allurement. Need I fear
To mention by its name, as in degree,
Lowest of these and humblest in attempt,
Yet richly graced with honours of her own,
Half-rural Sadler's Wells ? Though at that time
Intolerant, as is the way of youth
Unless itself be pleased, here more than once
Taking my seat, I saw (nor blush to add,
With ample recompense) giants and dwarfs,
Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins,
Amid the uproar of the rabblement,
Perform their feats. Nor was it mean delight
To watch crude Nature work in untaught minds ;
To note the laws and progress of belief ;
Though obstinate on this way, yet on that
How willingly we travel, and how far !

To have, for instance, brought upon the scene
The champion, Jack the Giant-killer; Lo!
He dons his coat of darkness; on the stage
Walks, and achieves his wonders, from the eye
Of living Mortal covert, "as the moon
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave."
Delusion bold! and how can it be wrought?
The garb he wears is black as death, the word
"*Invisible*" flames forth upon his chest.

Here, too, were "forms and pressures of the time,"
Rough, bold, as Grecian comedy displayed
When Art was young; dramas of living men,
And recent things yet warm with life; a sea-fight,
Shipwreck, or some domestic incident
Divulged by Truth and magnified by Fame,
Such as the daring brotherhood of late
Set forth, too serious theme for that light place—
I mean, O distant Friend! a story drawn
From our own ground,—the Maid of Buttermere,—
And how, unfaithful to a virtuous wife
Deserted and deceived, the spoiler came
And wooed the artless daughter of the hills,
And wedded her, in cruel mockery
Of love and marriage bonds. These words to thee

Must needs bring back the moment when we first,
Ere the broad world rang with the maiden's name,
Beheld her serving at the cottage inn,
Both stricken, as she entered or withdrew,
With admiration of her modest mien
And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.
We since that time not unfamiliarly
Have seen her,—her discretion have observed,
Her just opinions, delicate reserve,
Her patience, and humility of mind
Unspoiled by commendation and the excess
Of public notice—an offensive light
To a meek spirit suffering inwardly.

From this memorial tribute to my theme
I was returning, when, with sundry forms
Commingled—shapes which met me in the way
That we must tread—thy image rose again,
Maiden of Buttermere! She lives in peace
Upon the spot where she was born and reared;
Without contamination doth she live
In quietness, without anxiety:
Beside the mountain chapel, sleeps in earth
Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb
That, thither driven from some unsheltered place,

Rests underneath the little rock-like pile
When storms are raging. Happy are they both—
Mother and child!—These feelings, in themselves
Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think
On those ingenuous moments of our youth
Ere we have learnt by use to slight the crimes
And sorrows of the world. Those simple days
Are now my theme; and, foremost of the scenes,
Which yet survive in memory, appears
One, at whose centre sate a lovely Boy,
A sportive infant, who, for six months' space,
Not more, had been of age to deal about
Articulate prattle—Child as beautiful
As ever clung around a mother's neck,
Or father fondly gazed upon with pride.
There, too, conspicuous for stature tall
And large dark eyes, beside her infant stood
The mother; but, upon her cheeks diffused,
False tints too well accorded with the glare
From play-house lustres thrown without reserve
On every object near. The Boy had been
The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on
In whatsoever place, but seemed in this
A sort of alien scattered from the clouds.
Of lusty vigour, more than infantine

He was in limb, in cheek a summer rose
Just three parts blown—a cottage-child—if e'er,
By cottage-door on breezy mountain side,
Or in some sheltering vale, was seen a babe
By Nature's gifts so favoured. Upon a board
Decked with refreshments had this child been placed,
His little stage in a vast theatre,
And there he sate surrounded with a throng
Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men
And shameless women, treated and caressed;
Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,
While oaths and laughter and indecent speech
Were rife about him as the songs of birds
Contending after showers. The mother now
Is fading out of memory, but I see
The lovely Boy as I beheld him then
Among the wretched and the falsely gay,
Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged
Amid the fiery furnace. Charms and spells
Muttered on black and spiteful instigation
Have stopped, as some believe, the kindliest growths.
Ah, with how different spirit might a prayer
Have been preferred, that this fair creature, checked
By special privilege of Nature's love,
Should in his childhood be detained for ever!

But with its universal freight the tide
Hath rolled along, and this bright innocent,
Mary! may now have lived till he could look
With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps,
Beside the mountain chapel, undisturbed.

Four rapid years had scarcely then been told
Since, travelling southward from our pastoral hills,
I heard, and for the first time in my life,
The voice of woman utter blasphemy—
Saw woman as she is, to open shame
Abandoned, and the pride of public vice;
I shuddered, for a barrier seemed at once
Thrown in, that from humanity divorced
Humanity, splitting the race of man
In twain, yet leaving the same outward form.
Distress of mind ensued upon the sight
And ardent meditation. Later years
Brought to such spectacle a milder sadness,
Feelings of pure commiseration, grief
For the individual and the overthrow
Of her soul's beauty; farther I was then
But seldom led, or wished to go; in truth
The sorrow of the passion stopped me there.

But let me now, less moved, in order take
Our argument. Enough is said to show
How casual incidents of real life,
Observed where pastime only had been sought,
Outweighed, or put to flight, the set events
And measured passions of the stage, albeit
By Siddons trod in the fulness of her power.
Yet was the theatre my dear delight;
The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls,
And all the mean upholstery of the place,
Wanted not animation, when the tide
Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast
With the ever-shifting figures of the scene
Solemn or gay: whether some beauteous dame
Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
Of thick entangled forest, like the moon
Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced
With flourishing trumpet, came in full-blown state
Of the world's greatness, winding round with train
Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards;
Or captive led in abject weeds, and jingling
His slender manacles; or romping girl
Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire,
A scare-crow pattern of old age dressed up
In all the tatters of infirmity

All loosely put together, hobbled in,
Stumping upon a cane with which he smites,
From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them
Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabout
Of one so overloaded with his years.
But what of this! the laugh, the grin, grimace,
The antics striving to outstrip each other,
Were all received, the least of them not lost,
With an unmeasured welcome. Through the night,
Between the show, and many-headed mass
Of the spectators, and each several nook
Filled with its fray or brawl, how eagerly
And with what flashes, as it were, the mind
Turned this way—that way! sportive and alert
And watchful, as a kitten when at play,
While winds are eddying round her, among straws
And rustling leaves. Enchanting age and sweet!
Romantic almost, looked at through a space,
How small, of intervening years! For then,
Though surely no mean progress had been made
In meditations holy and sublime,
Yet something of a girlish child-like gloss
Of novelty survived for scenes like these;
Enjoyment haply handed down from times
When at a country-playhouse, some rude barn

Tricked out for that proud use, if I perchance
Caught, on a summer evening through a chink
In the old wall, an unexpected glimpse
Of daylight, the bare thought of where I was
Gladdened me more than if I had been led
Into a dazzling cavern of romance,
Crowded with Genii busy among works
Not to be looked at by the common sun.

The matter that detains us now may seem,
To many, neither dignified enough
Nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them,
Who, looking inward, have observed the ties
That bind the perishable hours of life
Each to the other, and the curious props
By which the world of memory and thought
Exists and is sustained. More lofty themes,
Such as at least do wear a prouder face,
Solicit our regard; but when I think
Of these, I feel the imaginative power
Languish within me; even then it slept,
When, pressed by tragic sufferings, the heart
Was more than full; amid my sobs and tears
It slept, even in the pregnant season of youth.
For though I was most passionately moved

And yielded to all changes of the scene
With an obsequious promptness, yet the storm
Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind;
Save when realities of act and mien,
The incarnation of the spirits that move
In harmony amid the Poet's world,
Rose to ideal grandeur, or, called forth
By power of contrast, made me recognise,
As at a glance, the things which I had shaped,
And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,
When, having closed the mighty Shakspeare's page,
I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude.

Pass we from entertainments, that are such
Professedly, to others titled higher,
Yet, in the estimate of youth at least,
More near akin to those than names imply,—
I mean the brawls of lawyers in their courts
Before the ermined judge, or that great stage
Where senators, tongue-favoured men, perform,
Admired and envied. Oh! the beating heart,
When one among the prime of these rose up,—
One, of whose name from childhood we had heard
Familiarly, a household term, like those,
The Bedfords, Glosters, Salsburys, of old

Whom the fifth Harry talks of. Silence! hush!
This is no trifler, no short-flighted wit,
No stammerer of a minute, painfully
Delivered. No! the Orator hath yoked
The Hours, like young Aurora, to his car:
Thrice welcome Presence! how can patience e'er
Grow weary of attending on a track
That kindles with such glory! All are charmed,
Astonished; like a hero in romance,
He winds away his never-ending horn;
Words follow words, sense seems to follow sense:
What memory and what logic! till the strain
Transcendent, superhuman as it seemed,
Grows tedious even in a young man's ear.

Genius of Burke! forgive the pen seduced
By specious wonders, and too slow to tell
Of what the ingenuous, what bewildered men,
Beginning to mistrust their boastful guides,
And wise men, willing to grow wiser, caught,
Rapt auditors! from thy most eloquent tongue—
Now mute, for ever mute in the cold grave.
I see him,—old, but vigorous in age,—
Stand like an oak whose stag-horn branches start
Out of its leafy brow, the more to awe

The younger brethren of the grove. But some—
While he forewarns, denounces, launches forth,
Against all systems built on abstract rights,
Keen ridicule; the majesty proclaims
Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;
Declares the vital power of social ties
Endeared by Custom; and with high disdain,
Exploding upstart Theory, insists
Upon the allegiance to which men are born—
Some—say at once a froward multitude—
Murmur (for truth is hated, where not loved)
As the winds fret within the Æolian cave,
Galled by their monarch's chain. The times were big
With ominous change, which, night by night, provoked
Keen struggles, and black clouds of passion raised;
But memorable moments intervened,
When Wisdom, like the Goddess from Jove's brain,
Broke forth in armour of resplendent words,
Startling the Synod. Could a youth, and one
In ancient story versed, whose breast had heaved
Under the weight of classic eloquence,
Sit, see, and hear, unthankful, uninspired?

Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail
To achieve its higher triumph. Not unfelt

Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard
The awful truths delivered thence by tongues
Endowed with various power to search the soul;
Yet ostentation, domineering, oft
Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place!—
There have I seen a comely bachelor,
Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
His rostrum, with seraphic glance look up,
And, in a tone elaborately low
Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze
A minuet course; and, winding up his mouth,
From time to time, into an orifice
Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small,
And only not invisible, again
Open it out, diffusing thence a smile
Of rapt irradiation, exquisite.
Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,
Moses, and he who penned, the other day,
The Death of Abel, Shakspeare, and the Bard
Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme
With fancies thick as his inspiring stars,
And Ossian (doubt not, 'tis the naked truth)
Summoned from streamy Morven—each and all
Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers
To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped

This pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains,
To rule and guide his captivated flock.

I glance but at a few conspicuous marks,
Leaving a thousand others, that, in hall,
Court, theatre, conventicle, or shop,
In public room or private, park or street,
Each fondly reared on his own pedestal,
Looked out for admiration. Folly, vice,
Extravagance in gesture, mien, and dress,
And all the strife of singularity,
Lies to the ear, and lies to every sense—
Of these, and of the living shapes they wear,
There is no end. Such candidates for regard,
Although well pleased to be where they were found,
I did not hunt after, nor greatly prize,
Nor made unto myself a secret boast
Of reading them with quick and curious eye;
But, as a common produce, things that are
To-day, to-morrow will be, took of them
Such willing note, as, on some errand bound
That asks not speed, a Traveller might bestow
On sea-shells that bestrew the sandy beach,
Or daisies swarming through the fields of June.

But foolishness and madness in parade,
Though most at home in this their dear domain,
Are scattered everywhere, no rarities,
Even to the rudest novice of the Schools.
Me, rather, it employed, to note, and keep
In memory, those individual sights
Of courage, or integrity, or truth,
Or tenderness, which there, set off by foil,
Appeared more touching. One will I select;
A Father—for he bore that sacred name—
Him saw I, sitting in an open square,
Upon a corner-stone of that low wall,
Wherein were fixed the iron pales that fenced
A spacious grass-plot; there, in silence, sate
This One Man, with a sickly babe outstretched
Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought
For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air.
Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
He took no heed; but in his brawny arms
(The Artificer was to the elbow bare,
And from his work this moment had been stolen)
He held the child, and, bending over it,
As if he were afraid both of the sun
And of the air, which he had come to seek,
Eyed the poor babe with love unutterable.

As the black storm upon the mountain top
Sets off the sunbeam in the valley, so
That huge fermenting mass of human-kind
Serves as a solemn back-ground, or relief,
To single forms and objects, whence they draw,
For feeling and contemplative regard,
More than inherent liveliness and power.
How oft, amid those overflowing streets,
Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said
Unto myself, "The face of every one
That passes by me is a mystery!"
Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
Until the shapes before my eyes became
A second-sight procession, such as glides
Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond
The reach of common indication, lost
Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten
Abruptly, with the view (a sight not rare)
Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,
Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest
Wearing a written paper, to explain
His story, whence he came, and who he was.
Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round

As with the might of waters ; an apt type
This label seemed of the utmost we can know,
Both of ourselves and of the universe ;
And, on the shape of that unmoving man,
His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
As if admonished from another world.

Though reared upon the base of outward things,
Structures like these the excited spirit mainly
Builds for herself ; scenes different there are,
Full-formed, that take, with small internal help,
Possession of the faculties,—the peace
That comes with night ; the deep solemnity
Of nature's intermediate hours of rest,
When the great tide of human life stands still ;
The business of the day to come, unborn,
Of that gone by, locked up, as in the grave ;
The blended calmness of the heavens and earth,
Moonlight and stars, and empty streets, and sounds
Unfrequent as in deserts ; at late hours
Of winter evenings, when unwholesome rains
Are falling hard, with people yet astir,
The feeble salutation from the voice
Of some unhappy woman, now and then
Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,

Nothing is listened to. But these, I fear,
Are falsely catalogued; things that are, are not,
As the mind answers to them, or the heart
Is prompt, or slow, to feel. What say you, then,
To times, when half the city shall break out
Full of one passion, vengeance, rage, or fear?
To executions, to a street on fire,
Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From these sights
Take one,—that ancient festival, the Fair,
Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,
And named of St. Bartholomew; there, see
A work completed to our hands, that lays,
If any spectacle on earth can do,
The whole creative powers of man asleep!—
For once, the Muse's help will we implore,
And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,
Above the press and danger of the crowd,
Upon some showman's platform. What a shock
For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din,
Barbarian and infernal,—a phantasma,
Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!
Below, the open space, through every nook
Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive
With heads; the midway region, and above,
Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,

Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies ;
With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
And children whirling in their roundabouts ;
With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes,
And crack the voice in rivalship, the crowd
Inviting ; with buffoons against buffoons
Grimacing, writhing, screaming,—him who grinds
The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves,
Rattles the salt-box, thumps the kettle-drum,
And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks,
The silver-collared Negro with his timbrel,
Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering plumes.—
All moveables of wonder, from all parts,
Are here—Albinos, painted Indians, Dwarfs,
The Horse of knowledge, and the learned Pig,
The Stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,
Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible Girl,
The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,
The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft
Of modern Merlins, Wild Beasts, Puppet-shows,
All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things,
All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts
Of man, his dullness, madness, and their feats

All jumbled up together, to compose
A Parliament of Monsters. Tents and Booths
Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast mill,
Are vomiting, receiving on all sides,
Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms.

Oh, blank confusion! true epitome
Of what the mighty City is herself,
To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
Living amid the same perpetual whirl
Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
To one identity, by differences
That have no law, no meaning, and no end—
Oppression, under which even highest minds
Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.
But though the picture weary out the eye,
By nature an unmanageable sight,
It is not wholly so to him who looks
In steadiness, who hath among least things
An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
This, of all acquisitions, first awaits
On sundry and most widely different modes
Of education, nor with least delight
On that through which I passed. Attention springs,

And comprehensiveness and memory flow,
From early converse with the works of God
Among all regions; chiefly where appear
Most obviously simplicity and power.
Think, how the everlasting streams and woods,
Stretched and still stretching far and wide, exalt
The roving Indian, on his desert sands:
What grandeur not unfelt, what pregnant show
Of beauty, meets the sun-burnt Arab's eye:
And, as the sea propels, from zone to zone,
Its currents; magnifies its shoals of life
Beyond all compass; spreads, and sends aloft
Armies of clouds,—even so, its powers and aspects
Shape for mankind, by principles as fixed,
The views and aspirations of the soul
To majesty. Like virtue have the forms
Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less
The changeful language of their countenances
Quickens the slumbering mind, and aids the thoughts,
However multitudinous, to move
With order and relation. This, if still,
As hitherto, in freedom I may speak,
Not violating any just restraint,
As may be hoped, of real modesty,—
This did I feel, in London's vast domain.

The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;
The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,
Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
Of self-destroying, transitory things,
Composure, and ennobling Harmony.

BOOK EIGHTH

RETROSPECT—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN

BOOK VIII

RETROSPECT—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN

What sounds are those, Helvellyn, that are heard
Up to thy summit, through the depth of air
Ascending, as if distance had the power
To make the sounds more audible? What crowd
Covers, or sprinkles o'er, yon village green?
Crowd seems it, solitary hill! to thee,
Though but a little family of men,
Shepherds and tillers of the ground—betimes
Assembled with their children and their wives,
And here and there a stranger interspersed.
They hold a rustic fair—a festival,
Such as, on this side now, and now on that,
Repeated through his tributary vales,
Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest,
Sees annually, if clouds towards either ocean

Blown from their favourite resting-place, or mists
Dissolved, have left him an unshrouded head.
Delightful day it is for all who dwell
In this secluded glen, and eagerly
They give it welcome. Long ere heat of noon,
From byre or field the kine were brought; the sheep
Are penned in cotes; the chaffering is begun.
The heifer lows, uneasy at the voice
Of a new master; bleat the flocks aloud.
Booths are there none; a stall or two is here;
A lame man or a blind, the one to beg,
The other to make music; hither, too,
From far, with basket, slung upon her arm,
Of hawker's wares—books, pictures, combs, and pins—
Some aged woman finds her way again,
Year after year, a punctual visitant!
There also stands a speech-maker by rote,
Pulling the strings of his boxed raree-show;
And in the lapse of many years may come
Prouder itinerant, mountebank, or he
Whose wonders in a covered wain lie hid.
But one there is, the loveliest of them all,
Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out
For gains, and who that sees her would not buy?
Fruits of her father's orchard, are her wares,

And with the ruddy produce, she walks round
Among the crowd, half pleased with half ashamed
Of her new office, blushing restlessly.
The children now are rich, for the old to-day
Are generous as the young; and, if content
With looking on, some ancient wedded pair
Sit in the shade together, while they gaze,
"A cheerful smile unbends the wrinkled brow,
The days departed start again to life,
And all the scenes of childhood reappear,
Faint, but more tranquil, like the changing sun
To him who slept at noon and wakes at eve."
Thus gaiety and cheerfulness prevail,
Spreading from young to old, from old to young,
And no one seems to want his share.—Immense
Is the recess, the circumambient world
Magnificent, by which they are embraced:
They move about upon the soft green turf:
How little they, they and their doings, seem,
And all that they can further or obstruct!
Through utter weakness pitiably dear,
As tender infants are: and yet how great!
For all things serve them: them the morning light
Loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks;
And them the silent rocks, which now from high

Look down upon them; the reposing clouds;
The wild brooks prattling from invisible haunts;
And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir
Which animates this day their calm abode.

With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel,
In that enormous City's turbulent world
Of men and things, what benefit I owed
To thee, and those domains of rural peace,
Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
Was opened; tract more exquisitely fair
Than that famed paradise of ten thousand trees,
Or Gehol's matchless gardens, for delight
Of the Tartarian dynasty composed
(Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous,
China's stupendous mound) by patient toil
Of myriads and boon nature's lavish help;
There, in a clime from widest empire chosen,
Fulfilling (could enchantment have done more?)
A sumptuous dream of flowery lawns, with domes
Of pleasure sprinkled over, shady dells
For eastern monasteries, sunny mounts
With temples crested, bridges, gondolas,
Rocks, dens, and groves of foliage taught to melt
Into each other their obsequious hues,

Vanished and vanishing in subtle chase,
Too fine to be pursued ; or standing forth
In no discordant opposition, strong
And gorgeous as the colours side by side
Bedded among rich plumes of tropic birds ;
And mountains over all, embracing all ;
And all the landscape, endlessly enriched
With waters running, falling, or asleep.

But lovelier far than this, the paradise
Where I was reared ; in Nature's primitive gifts
Favoured no less, and more to every sense
Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
The elements, and seasons as they change,
Do find a worthy fellow-labourer there—
Man free, man working for himself, with choice
Of time, and place, and object ; by his wants,
His comforts, native occupations, cares,
Cheerfully led to individual ends
Or social, and still followed by a train
Unwooed, unthought-of even—simplicity,
And beauty, and inevitable grace.

Yea, when a glimpse of those imperial bowers
Would to a child be transport over-great,

When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
Would leave behind a dance of images,
That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks;
Even then the common haunts of the green earth,
And ordinary interests of man,
Which they embosom, all without regard
As both may seem, are fastening on the heart
Insensibly, each with the other's help.
For me, when my affections first were led
From kindred, friends, and playmates to partake
Love for the human creature's absolute self,
That noticeable kindliness of heart
Sprang out of fountains, there abounding most
Where sovereign Nature dictated the tasks
And occupations which her beauty adorned,
And Shepherds were the men that pleased me first;
Not such as Saturn ruled 'mid Latian wilds,
With arts and laws so tempered, that their lives
Left, even to us toiling in this late day,
A bright tradition of the golden age;
Not such as, 'mid Arcadian fastnesses
Sequestered, handed down among themselves
Felicity, in Grecian song renowned;
Nor such as, when an adverse fate had driven,
From house and home, the courtly band whose fortunes

Entered, with Shakspeare's genius, the wild woods
Of Arden, amid sunshine or in shade,
Culled the best fruits of Time's uncounted hours,
Ere Phœbe sighed for the false Ganymede;
Or there where Perdita and Florizel
Together danced, Queen of the feast, and King;
Nor such as Spenser fabled. True it is,
That I had heard (what he perhaps had seen)
Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far
Their May-bush, and along the street in flocks
Parading with a song of taunting rhymes,
Aimed at the laggards slumbering within doors;
Had also heard, from those who yet remembered,
Tales of the May-pole dance, and wreaths that decked
Porch, door-way, or kirk-pillar; and of youths,
Each with his maid, before the sun was up,
By annual custom, issuing forth in troops,
To drink the waters of some sainted well,
And hang it round with garlands. Love survives;
But, for such purpose, flowers no longer grow:
The times, too sage, perhaps too proud, have dropped
These lighter graces; and the rural ways
And manners which my childhood looked upon
Were the unluxuriant produce of a life
Intent on little but substantial needs,

Yet rich in beauty, beauty that was felt.
But images of danger and distress,
Man suffering among awful Powers and Forms;
Of this I heard, and saw enough to make
Imagination restless; nor was free
Myself from frequent perils; nor were tales
Wanting,—the tragedies of former times,
Hazards and strange escapes, of which the rocks
Immutable and everflowing streams,
Where'er I roamed, were speaking monuments.

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time,
Long springs and tepid winters, on the banks
Of delicate Galesus; and no less
Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores:
Smooth life had herdsman, and his snow-white herd
To triumphs and to sacrificial rites
Devoted, on the inviolable stream
Of rich Clitumnus; and the goat-herd lived
As calmly, underneath the pleasant brows
Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard
Of Pan, Invisible God, thrilling the rocks
With tutelary music, from all harm
The fold protecting. I myself, mature
In manhood then, have seen a pastoral tract

Like one of these, where Fancy might run wild,
Though under skies less generous, less serene :
There, for her own delight had Nature framed
A pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse
Of level pasture, islanded with groves
And banked with woody risings ; but the Plain
Endless, here opening widely out, and there
Shut up in lesser lakes or beds of lawn
And intricate recesses, creek or bay
Sheltered within a shelter, where at large
The shepherd strays, a rolling hut his home.
Thither he comes with spring-time, there abides
All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear
His flageolet to liquid notes of love
Attuned, or sprightly fife resounding far.
Nook is there none, nor tract of that vast space
Where passage opens, but the same shall have
In turn its visitant, telling there his hours
In unlaborious pleasure, with no task
More toilsome than to carve a beechen bowl
For spring or fountain, which the traveller finds,
When through the region he pursues at will
His devious course. A glimpse of such sweet life
I saw when, from the melancholy walls
Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed

My daily walk along that wide champaign,
That, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west,
And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge
Of the Hercynian forest. Yet, hail to you
Moors, mountains, headlands, and ye hollow vales,
Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
Powers of my native region! Ye that seize
The heart with firmer grasp! Your snows and streams
Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds,
That howl so dismally for him who treads
Companionless your awful solitudes!
There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
To wait upon the storms: of their approach
Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives
His flock, and thither from the homestead bears
A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
And deals it out, their regular nourishment
Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring
Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs,
And when the flock, with warmer weather, climbs
Higher and higher, him his office leads
To watch their goings, whatsoever track
The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home
At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun
Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,

Than he lies down upon some shining rock
And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen,
As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,
For rest not needed or exchange of love,
Then from his couch he starts; and now his feet
Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers
Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought
In the wild turf: the lingering dews of morn
Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies,
His staff protending like a hunter's spear,
Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag,
And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams.
Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call,
Might deign to follow him through what he does
Or sees in his day's march; himself he feels,
In those vast regions where his service lies,
A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
With that majestic indolence so dear
To native man. A rambling school-boy, thus
I felt his presence in his own domain,
As of a lord and master, or a power,
Or genius, under Nature, under God,
Presiding; and severest solitude
Had more commanding looks when he was there.

When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
His sheep like Greenland bears ; or, as he stepped
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun :
Or him have I descried in distant sky,
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height ! like an aerial cross
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man
Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature ; hence the human form
To me became an index of delight,
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.
Meanwhile this creature—spiritual almost
As those of books, but more exalted far ;
Far more of an imaginative form
Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives
For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour,

In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst—
Was, for the purposes of kind, a man
With the most common; husband, father; learned,
Could teach, admonish; suffered with the rest
From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear;
Of this I little saw, cared less for it,
But something must have felt.
Call ye these appearances—
Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
This sanctity of Nature given to man—
A shadow, a delusion, ye who pore
On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things;
Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
Instinct with vital functions, but a block
Or waxen image which yourselves have made.
And ye adore! But blessed be the God
Of Nature and of Man that this was so;
That men before my inexperienced eyes
Did first present themselves thus purified,
Removed, and to a distance that was fit:
And so we all of us in some degree
Are led to knowledge, wheresoever led,
And howsoever; were it otherwise,
And we found evil fast as we find good
In our first years, or think that it is found,

How could the innocent heart bear up and live!
But doubly fortunate my lot; not here
Alone, that something of a better life
Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege
Of most to move in, but that first I looked
At Man through objects that were great or fair;
First communed with him by their help. And thus
Was founded a sure safeguard and defence
Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,
Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in
On all sides from the ordinary world
In which we traffic. Starting from this point
I had my face turned toward the truth, began
With an advantage furnished by that kind
Of prepossession, without which the soul
Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good,
No genuine insight ever comes to her.
From the restraint of over-watchful eyes
Preserved, I moved about, year after year,
Happy, and now most thankful that my walk
Was guarded from too early intercourse
With the deformities of crowded life,
And those ensuing laughters and contempts,
Self-pleasing, which, if we would wish to think
With a due reverence on earth's rightful lord,

Here placed to be the inheritor of heaven,
Will not permit us; but pursue the mind,
That to devotion willingly would rise,
Into the temple and the temple's heart.

Yet deem not, Friend! that human kind with me
Thus early took a place pre-eminent;
Nature herself was, at this unripe time,
But secondary to my own pursuits
And animal activities, and all
Their trivial pleasures; and when these had drooped
And gradually expired, and Nature, prized
For her own sake, became my joy, even then—
And upwards through late youth, until not less
Than two-and-twenty summers had been told—
Was Man in my affections and regards
Subordinate to her, her visible forms
And viewless agencies: a passion, she,
A rapture often, and immediate love
Ever at hand; he, only a delight
Occasional, an accidental grace,
His hour being not yet come. Far less had then
The inferior creatures, beast or bird, attuned
My spirit to that gentleness of love
(Though they had long been carefully observed),

Won from me those minute obeisances
Of tenderness, which I may number now
With my first blessings. Nevertheless, on these
The light of beauty did not fall in vain,
Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end.

But when that first poetic faculty
Of plain Imagination and severe,
No longer a mute influence of the soul,
Ventured, at some rash Muse's earnest call,
To try her strength among harmonious words;
And to book-notions and the rules of art
Did knowingly conform itself; there came
Among the simple shapes of human life
A wilfulness of fancy and conceit;
And Nature and her objects beautified
These fictions, as in some sort, in their turn,
They burnished her. From touch of this new power
Nothing was safe: the elder-tree that grew
Beside the well-known charnel-house had then
A dismal look: the yew-tree had its ghost,
That took his station there for ornament:
The dignities of plain occurrence then
Were tasteless, and truth's golden mean, a point
Where no sufficient pleasure could be found.

Then, if a widow, staggering with the blow
Of her distress, was known to have turned her steps
To the cold grave in which her husband slept,
One night, or haply more than one, through pain
Or half-insensate impotence of mind,
The fact was caught at greedily, and there
She must be visitant the whole year through,
Wetting the turf with never-ending tears.

Through quaint obliquities I might pursue
These cravings ; when the fox-glove, one by one,
Upwards through every stage of the tall stem,
Had shed beside the public way its bells,
And stood of all dismantled, save the last
Left at the tapering ladder's top, that seemed
To bend as doth a slender blade of grass
Tipped with a rain-drop, Fancy loved to seat,
Beneath the plant despoiled, but crested still
With this last relic, soon itself to fall,
Some vagrant mother, whose arch little ones,
All unconcerned by her dejected plight,
Laughed as with rival eagerness their hands
Gathered the purple cups that round them lay,
Strewing the turf's green slope.

A diamond light

(Whene'er the summer sun, declining, smote
A smooth rock wet with constant springs) was seen
Sparkling from a copse-clad bank that rose
Fronting our cottage. Oft beside the hearth
Seated, with open door, often and long
Upon this restless lustre have I gazed,
That made my fancy restless as itself.
'Twas now for me a burnished silver shield
Suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay
Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood:
An entrance now into some magic cave
Or palace built by fairies of the rock;
Nor could I have been bribed to disenchant
The spectacle, by visiting the spot.
Thus wilful Fancy, in no hurtful mood,
Engrafted far-fetched shapes on feelings bred
By pure Imagination: busy Power
She was, and with her ready pupil turned
Instinctively to human passions, then
Least understood. Yet, 'mid the fervent swarm
Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich
As mine was through the bounty of a grand
And lovely region, I had forms distinct
To steady me: each airy thought revolved
Round a substantial centre, which at once

Incited it to motion, and controlled.
I did not pine like one in cities bred,
As was thy melancholy lot, dear Friend!
Great Spirit as thou art, in endless dreams
Of sickliness, disjoining, joining, things
Without the light of knowledge. Where the harm,
If, when the woodman languished with disease
Induced by sleeping nightly on the ground
Within his sod-built cabin, Indian-wise,
I called the pangs of disappointed love,
And all the sad etcetera of the wrong,
To help him to his grave. Meanwhile the man,
If not already from the woods retired
To die at home, was haply, as I knew,
Withering by slow degrees, 'mid gentle airs,
Birds, running streams, and hills so beautiful
On golden evenings, while the charcoal pile
Breathed up its smoke, an image of his ghost
Or spirit that full soon must take her flight.
Nor shall we not be tending towards that point
Of sound humanity to which our Tale
Leads, though by sinuous ways, if here I shew
How Fancy, in a season when she wove
Those slender cords, to guide the unconscious Boy
For the Man's sake, could feed at Nature's call

Some pensive musings which might well beseem
Maturer years.
A grove there is whose boughs
Stretch from the western marge of Thurston-mere,
With length of shade so thick, that whoso glides
Along the line of low-roofed water, moves
As in a cloister. Once—while, in that shade
Loitering, I watched the golden beams of light
Flung from the setting sun, as they reposed
In silent beauty on the naked ridge
Of a high eastern hill—thus flowed my thoughts
In a pure stream of words fresh from the heart:
Dear native Regions, wheresoe'er shall close
My mortal course, there will I think on you;
Dying, will cast on you a backward look;
Even as this setting sun (albeit the Vale
Is nowhere touched by one memorial gleam)
Doth with the fond remains of his last power
Still linger, and a farewell lustre sheds
On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose.

Enough of humble arguments; recal,
My Song! those high emotions which thy voice
Has heretofore made known; that bursting forth
Of sympathy, inspiring and inspired,

When everywhere a vital pulse was felt,
And all the several frames of things, like stars,
Through every magnitude distinguishable,
Shone mutually indebted, or half lost
Each in the other's blaze, a galaxy
Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man,
Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,
As, of all visible natures, crown, though born
Of dust, and kindred to the worm ; a Being,
Both in perception and discernment, first
In every capability of rapture,
Through the divine effect of power and love ;
As, more than anything we know, instinct
With godhead, and, by reason and by will,
Acknowledging dependency sublime.

Ere long, the lonely mountains left, I moved,
Begirt, from day to day, with temporal shapes
Of vice and folly thrust upon my view,
Objects of sport, and ridicule, and scorn,
Manners and characters discriminate,
And little bustling passions that eclipse,
As well they might, the impersonated thought,
The idea, or abstraction of the kind.

An idler among academic bowers,
Such was my new condition, as at large
Has been set forth ; yet here the vulgar light
Of present, actual, superficial life,
Gleaming through colouring of other times,
Old usages and local privilege,
Was welcome, softened, if not solemnised.
This notwithstanding, being brought more near
To vice and guilt, forerunning wretchedness,
I trembled,—thought, at times, of human life
With an indefinite terror and dismay,
Such as the storms and angry elements
Had bred in me ; but gloomier far, a dim
Analogy to uproar and misrule,
Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.

It might be told (but wherefore speak of things
Common to all ?) that, seeing, I was led
Gravely to ponder—judging between good
And evil, not as for the mind's delight
But for her guidance—one who was to *act*,
As sometimes to the best of feeble means
I did, by human sympathy impelled :
And, through dislike and most offensive pain,
Was to the truth conducted ; of this faith

Never forsaken, that, by acting well,
And understanding, I should learn to love
The end of life, and every thing we know.

Grave Teacher, stern Preceptress! for at times
Thou canst put on an aspect most severe;
London, to thee I willingly return.
Erewhile my verse played idly with the flowers
Enwrought upon thy mantle; satisfied
With that amusement, and a simple look
Of child-like inquisition now and then
Cast upwards on thy countenance, to detect
Some inner meanings which might harbour there.
But how could I in mood so light indulge,
Keeping such fresh remembrance of the day,
When, having thridded the long labyrinth
Of the suburban villages, I first
Entered thy vast dominion? On the roof
Of an itinerant vehicle I sate,
With vulgar men about me, trivial forms
Of houses, pavement, streets, of men and things,—
Mean shapes on every side: but, at the instant,
When to myself it fairly might be said,
The threshold now is overpast, (how strange
That aught external to the living mind

Should have such mighty sway! yet so it was,)
A weight of ages did at once descend
Upon my heart; no thought embodied, no
Distinct remembrances, but weight and power,—
Power growing under weight: alas! I feel
That I am trifling: 'twas a moment's pause,
All that took place within me came and went
As in a moment; yet with Time it dwells,
And grateful memory, as a thing divine.

The curious traveller, who, from open day,
Hath passed with torches into some huge cave,
The Grotto of Antiparos, or the Den
In old time haunted by that Danish Witch,
Yordas; he looks around and sees the vault
Widening on all sides; sees, or thinks he sees,
Erelong, the massy roof above his head,
That instantly unsettles and recedes,—
Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all
Commingled, making up a canopy
Of shapes and forms and tendencies to shape
That shift and vanish, change and interchange
Like spectres,—ferment silent and sublime!
That after a short space works less and less,
Till, every effort, every motion gone,

The scene before him stands in perfect view
Exposed, and lifeless as a written book !—
But let him pause awhile, and look again,
And a new quickening shall succeed, at first
Beginning timidly, then creeping fast,
Till the whole cave, so late a senseless mass,
Busies the eye with images and forms
Boldly assembled,—here is shadowed forth
From the projections, wrinkles, cavities,
A variegated landscape,—there the shape
Of some gigantic warrior clad in mail,
The ghostly semblance of a hooded monk,
Veiled nun, or pilgrim resting on his staff:
Strange congregation ! yet not slow to meet
Eyes that perceive through minds that can inspire.

Even in such sort had I at first been moved,
Nor otherwise continued to be moved,
As I explored the vast metropolis,
Fount of my country's destiny and the world's ;
That great emporium, chronicle at once
And burial-place of passions, and their home
Imperial, their chief living residence.

With strong sensations teeming as it did

Of past and present, such a place must needs
Have pleased me, seeking knowledge at that time
Far less than craving power ; yet knowledge came,
Sought or unsought, and influxes of power
Came, of themselves, or at her call derived
In fits of kindliest apprehensiveness,
From all sides, when whate'er was in itself
Capacious found, or seemed to find, in me
A correspondent amplitude of mind ;
Such is the strength and glory of our youth !
The human nature unto which I felt
That I belonged, and reverenced with love,
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit
Diffused through time and space, with aid derived
Of evidence from monuments, erect,
Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest
In earth, the widely scattered wreck sublime
Of vanished nations, or more clearly drawn
From books and what they picture and record.

'Tis true, the history of our native land,
With those of Greece compared and popular Rome,
And in our high-wrought modern narratives
Stript of their harmonising soul, the life
Of manners and familiar incidents,

Had never much delighted me. And less
Than other intellects had mine been used
To lean upon extrinsic circumstance
Of record or tradition; but a sense
Of what in the Great City has been done
And suffered, and was doing, suffering, still,
Weighed with me, could support the test of thought;
And, in despite of all that had gone by,
Or was departing never to return,
There I conversed with majesty and power
Like independent natures. Hence the place
Was thronged with impregnations like the Wilds
In which my early feelings had been nursed—
Bare hills and valleys, full of caverns, rocks,
And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,
Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags
That into music touch the passing wind.
Here then my young imagination found
No uncongenial element; could here
Among new objects serve or give command,
Even as the heart's occasions might require,
To forward reason's else too scrupulous march.
The effect was, still more elevated views
Of human nature. Neither vice not guilt,
Debasement undergone by body or mind,

Nor all the misery forced upon my sight,
Misery not lightly passed, but sometimes scanned
Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
In what we *may* become; induce belief
That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,
A solitary, who with vain conceits
Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams.
From those sad scenes when meditation turned,
Lo! every thing that was indeed divine
Retained its purity inviolate,
Nay brighter shone, by this portentous gloom
Set off; such opposition as aroused
The mind of Adam, yet in Paradise
Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw
Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light
More orient in the western cloud, that drew
O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
Descending slow with something heavenly fraught.

Add also, that among the multitudes
Of that huge city, oftentimes was seen
Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
Is possible, the unity of man,
One spirit over ignorance and vice
Predominant, in good and evil hearts;

One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
For the sun's light. The soul when smitten thus
By a sublime *idea*, whencesoe'er
Vouchsafed for union or communion, feeds
On the pure bliss, and takes her rest with God.

Thus from a very early age, O Friend!
My thoughts by slow gradations had been drawn
To human-kind, and to the good and ill
Of human life: Nature had led me on;
And oft amid the "busy hum" I seemed
To travel independent of her help,
As if I had forgotten her; but no,
The world of human-kind outweighed not hers
In my habitual thoughts; the scale of love,
Though filling daily, still was light, compared
With that in which *her* mighty objects lay.

BOOK IX

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

BOOK NINTH

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

Even as a river,—partly (it might seem)
Yielding to old remembrances, and swayed
In part by fear to shape a way direct,
That would engulph him soon in the ravenous sea—
Turns, and will measure back his course, far back,
Seeking the very regions which he crossed
In his first outset; so have we, my Friend!
Turned and returned with intricate delay.
Or as a traveller, who has gained the brow
Of some aerial Down, while there he halts
For breathing-time, is tempted to review
The region left behind him; and, if aught
Deserving notice have escaped regard,
Or been regarded with too careless eye,
Strives, from that height, with one and yet one more

Last look, to make the best amends he may :
So have we lingered. Now we start afresh
With courage, and new hope risen on our toil.
Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness,
Whene'er it comes ! needful in work so long,
Thrice needful to the argument which now
Awaits us ! Oh, how much unlike the past !

Free as a colt at pasture on the hill,
I ranged at large, through London's wide domain,
Month after month. Obscurely did I live,
Not seeking frequent intercourse with men,
By literature, or elegance, or rank,
Distinguished. Scarcely was a year thus spent
Ere I forsook the crowded solitude,
With less regret for its luxurious pomp,
And all the nicely-guarded shows of art,
Than for the humble book-stalls in the streets,
Exposed to eye and hand where'er I turned.

France lured me forth ; the realm that I had crossed
So lately, journeying toward the snow-clad Alps.
But now, relinquishing the scrip and staff,
And all enjoyment which the summer sun
Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day

With motion constant as his own, I went
Prepared to sojourn in a pleasant town,
Washed by the current of the stately Loire.

Through Paris lay my readiest course, and there
Sojourning a few days, I visited,
In haste, each spot of old or recent fame,
The latter chiefly ; from the field of Mars
Down to the suburbs of St. Antony,
And from Mont Martyr southward to the Dome
Of Geneviève. In both her clamorous Halls,
The National Synod and the Jacobins,
I saw the Revolutionary Power
Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms ;
The Arcades I traversed, in the Palace huge
Of Orleans ; coasted round and round the line
Of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop,
Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk
Of all who had a purpose, or had not ;
I stared and listened, with a stranger's ears,
To Hawkers and Haranguers, hubbub wild !
And hissing Factionists with ardent eyes,
In knots, or pairs, or single. Not a look
Hope takes, or Doubt or Fear is forced to wear,
But seemed there present ; and I scanned them all,

Watched every gesture uncontrollable,
Of anger, and vexation, and despite,
All side by side, and struggling face to face,
With gaiety and dissolute idleness.

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
Of the Bastille, I sate in the open sun,
And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
And pocketed the relic, in the guise
Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
I looked for something that I could not find,
Affecting more emotion than I felt;
For 'tis most certain, that these various sights,
However potent their first shock, with me
Appeared to recompense the traveller's pains
Less than the painted Magdalene of Le Brun,
A beauty exquisitely wrought, with hair
Dishevelled, gleaming eyes, and rueful cheek
Pale and bedropped with everflowing tears.

But hence to my more permanent abode
I hasten; there, by novelties in speech,
Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
And all the attire of ordinary life,
Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused,

I stood, 'mid those concussions, unconcerned,
Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
Glassed in a green-house, or a parlour shrub
That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace,
While every bush and tree, the country through,
Is shaking to the roots: indifference this
Which may seem strange: but I was unprepared
With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
Into a theatre, whose stage was filled
And busy with an action far advanced.
Like others, I had skimmed, and sometimes read
With care, the master pamphlets of the day;
Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild
Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
And public news; but having never seen
A chronicle that might suffice to show
Whence the main organs of the public power
Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how
Accomplished, giving thus unto events
A form and body; all things were to me
Loose and disjointed, and the affections left
Without a vital interest. At that time,
Moreover, the first storm was overblown,
And the strong hand of outward violence
Locked up in quiet. For myself, I fear

Now in connection with so great a theme
To speak (as I must be compelled to do)
Of one so unimportant; night by night
Did I frequent the formal haunts of men,
Whom, in the city, privilege of birth
Sequestered from the rest, societies
Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed;
Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse
Of good and evil of the time was shunned
With scrupulous care; but these restrictions soon
Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
Into a noisier world, and thus ere long
Became a patriot; and my heart was all
Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

A band of military Officers,
Then stationed in the city, were the chief
Of my associates: some of these wore swords
That had been seasoned in the wars, and all
Were men well-born; the chivalry of France.
In age and temper differing, they had yet
One spirit ruling in each heart; alike
(Save only one, hereafter to be named)
Were bent upon undoing what was done:
This was their rest and only hope; therewith

No fear had they of bad becoming worse,
For worst to them was come; nor would have stirred,
Or deemed it worth a moment's thought to stir,
In any thing, save only as the act
Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,
Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile
He had sate lord in many tender hearts;
Though heedless of such honours now, and changed:
His temper was quite mastered by the times,
And they had blighted him, had eaten away
The beauty of his person, doing wrong
Alike to body and to mind: his port,
Which once had been erect and open, now
Was stooping and contracted, and a face,
Endowed by Nature with her fairest gifts
Of symmetry and light and bloom, expressed,
As much as any that was ever seen,
A ravage out of season, made by thoughts
Unhealthy and vexatious. With the hour,
That from the press of Paris duly brought
Its freight of public news, the fever came,
A punctual visitant, to shake this man,
Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek
Into a thousand colours; while he read,
Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch

Continually, like an uneasy place
In his own body. 'Twas in truth an hour
Of universal ferment; mildest men
Were agitated; and commotions, strife
Of passion and opinion, filled the walls
Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds.
The soil of common life was, at that time,
Too hot to tread upon. Oft said I then,
And not then only, "What a mockery this
Of history, the past and that to come!
Now do I feel how all men are deceived,
Reading of nations and their works, in faith,
Faith given to vanity and emptiness;
Oh! laughter for the page that would reflect
To future times the face of what now is!"
The land all swarmed with passion, like a plain
Devoured by locusts,—Carra, Gorsas,—add
A hundred other names, forgotten now,
Nor to be heard of more; yet, they were powers,
Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,
And felt through every nook of town and field.

Such was the state of things. Meanwhile the chief
Of my associates stood prepared for flight
To augment the band of emigrants in arms

Upon the borders of the Rhine, and leagued
With foreign foes mustered for instant war.
This was their undisguised intent, and they
Were waiting with the whole of their desires
The moment to depart.
An Englishman,
Born in a land whose very name appeared
To license some unruliness of mind;
A stranger, with youth's further privilege,
And the indulgence that a half-learnt speech
Wins from the courteous; I, who had been else
Shunned and not tolerated, freely lived
With these defenders of the Crown, and talked,
And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
The wish to bring me over to their cause.

But though untaught by thinking or by books
To reason well of polity or law,
And nice distinctions, then on every tongue,
Of natural rights and civil; and to acts
Of nations and their passing interests,
(If with unworldly ends and aims compared)
Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale
Prizing but little otherwise than I prized
Tales of the poets, as it made the heart

Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms,
Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds:
Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
And ill could brook, beholding that the best
Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district, and which yet
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
Than any other nook of English ground,
It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,
The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
Was vested with attention or respect
Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
Of many benefits, in later years
Derived from academic institutes
And rules, that they held something up to view
Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
In honour, as in one community,
Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
Distinction open lay to all that came,

And wealth and titles were in less esteem
Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.
Add unto this, subservience from the first
To presences of God's mysterious power
Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,
And fellowship with venerable books,
To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
And mountain liberty. It could not be
But that one tutored thus should look with awe
Upon the faculties of man, receive
Gladly the highest promises, and hail,
As best, the government of equal rights
And individual worth. And hence, O Friend!
If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
In part lay here, that unto me the events
Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
A gift that was come rather late than soon.
No wonder, then, if advocates like these,
Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice,
And stung with injury, at this riper day,
Were impotent to make my hopes put on
The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
In honour to their honour: zeal, which yet
Had slumbered, now in opposition burst

Forth like a Polar summer: every word
They uttered was a dart, by counter-winds
Blown back upon themselves; their reason seemed
Confusion-stricken by a higher power
Than human understanding, their discourse
Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,
I triumphed.

Meantime, day by day, the roads
Were crowded with the bravest youth of France,
And all the promptest of her spirits, linked
In gallant soldiership, and posting on
To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.
Yet at this very moment do tears start
Into mine eyes: I do not say I weep—
I wept not then,—but tears have dimmed my sight,
In memory of the farewells of that time,
Domestic severings, female fortitude
At dearest separation, patriot love
And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope,
Encouraged with a martyr's confidence;
Even files of strangers merely seen but once,
And for a moment, men from far with sound
Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
Entering the city, here and there a face,
Or person singled out among the rest,

Yet still a stranger and beloved as such ;
Even by these passing spectacles my heart
Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
Hater perverse of equity and truth.

Among that band of Officers was one,
Already hinted at, of other mould—
A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
And with an oriental loathing spurned,
As of a different caste. A meeker man
Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
As through a book, an old romance, or tale
Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
With the most noble, but unto the poor

Among mankind he was in service bound,
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
To a religious order. Man he loved
As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,
And all the homely in their homely works,
Transferred a courtesy which had no air
Of condescension; but did rather seem
A passion and a gallantry, like that
Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was,
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
Diffused around him, while he was intent
On works of love or freedom, or revolved
Complacently the progress of a cause,
Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek
And placid, and took nothing from the man
That was delightful. Oft in solitude
With him did I discourse about the end
Of civil government, and its wisest forms;
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
Custom and habit, novelty and change;
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
For patrimonial honour set apart,
And ignorance in the labouring multitude.

For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
Balanced these contemplations in his mind;
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment
Than later days allowed; carried about me,
With less alloy to its integrity,
The experience of past ages, as, through help
Of books and common life, it makes sure way
To youthful minds, by objects over near
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find
Error without excuse upon the side
Of them who strove against us, more delight
We took, and let this freely be confessed,
In painting to ourselves the miseries
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,
True personal dignity, abideth not;
A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off
From the natural inlets of just sentiment,
From lowly sympathy and chastening truth;
Where good and evil interchange their names,

And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
With vice at home. We added dearest themes—
Man and his noble nature, as it is
The gift which God has placed within his power,
His blind desires and steady faculties
Capable of clear truth, the one to break
Bondage, the other to build liberty
On firm foundations, making social life,
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
As just in regulation, and as pure
As individual in the wise and good.

We summoned up the honourable deeds
Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot,
That would be found in all recorded time,
Of truth preserved and error passed away ;
Of single spirits that catch the flame from Heaven,
And how the multitudes of men will feed
And fan each other ; thought of sects, how keen
They are to put the appropriate nature on,
Triumphant over every obstacle
Of custom, language, country, love, or hate,
And what they do and suffer for their creed ;
How far they travel, and how long endure ;
How quickly mighty Nations have been formed,

From least beginnings; how, together locked
By new opinions, scattered tribes have made
One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.
To aspirations then of our own minds
Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
A living confirmation of the whole
Before us, in a people from the depth
Of shameful imbecility uprisen,
Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
And continence of mind, and sense of right,
Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

Oh, sweet it is, in academic groves,
Or such retirement, Friend! as we have known
In the green dales beside our Rotha's stream,
Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless rill,
To ruminate, with interchange of talk,
On rational liberty, and hope in man,
Justice and peace. But far more sweet such toil—
Toil, say I, for it leads to thoughts abstruse—
If nature then be standing on the brink
Of some great trial, and we hear the voice
Of one devoted,—one whom circumstance

Hath called upon to embody his deep sense
In action, give it outwardly a shape,
And that of benediction, to the world.
Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth,—
A hope it is, and a desire; a creed
Of zeal, by an authority Divine
Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death.
Such conversation, under Attic shades,
Did Dion hold with Plato; ripened thus
For a Deliverer's glorious task,—and such
He, on that ministry already bound,
Held with Eudemus and Timonides,
Surrounded by adventurers in arms,
When those two vessels with their daring freight,
For the Sicilian Tyrant's overthrow,
Sailed from Zacynthus,—philosophic war,
Led by Philosophers. With harder fate,
Though like ambition, such was he, O Friend!
Of whom I speak. So Beaupuy (let the name
Stand near the worthiest of Antiquity)
Fashioned his life; and many a long discourse,
With like persuasion honoured, we maintained:
He, on his part, accoutred for the worst.
He perished fighting, in supreme command,
Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire,

For liberty, against deluded men,
His fellow country-men; and yet most blessed
In this, that he the fate of later times
Lived not to see, nor what we now behold,
Who have as ardent hearts as he had then.

Along that very Loire, with festal mirth
Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet
Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk;
Or in wide forests of continuous shade,
Lofty and over-arched, with open space
Beneath the trees, clear footing many a mile—
A solemn region. Oft amid those haunts,
From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought,
And let remembrance steal to other times,
When, o'er those interwoven roots, moss-clad,
And smooth as marble or a waveless sea,
Some Hermit, from his cell forth-strayed, might pace
In sylvan meditation undisturbed;
As on the pavement of a Gothic church
Walks a lone Monk, when service hath expired,
In peace and silence. But if e'er was heard,—
Heard, though unseen,—a devious traveller,
Retiring or approaching from afar
With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs

From the hard floor reverberated, then
It was Angelica thundering through the woods
Upon her palfrey, or that gentle maid
Erminia, fugitive as fair as she.
Sometimes methought I saw a pair of knights
Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm
Rocked high above their heads ; anon, the din
Of boisterous merriment, and music's roar,
In sudden proclamation, burst from haunt
Of Satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance
Rejoicing o'er a female in the midst,
A mortal beauty, their unhappy thrall.
The width of those huge forests, unto me
A novel scene, did often in this way
Master my fancy while I wandered on
With that revered companion. And sometimes—
When to a convent in a meadow green,
By a brook-side, we came, a roofless pile,
And not by reverential touch of Time
Dismantled, but by violence abrupt—
In spite of those heart-bracing colloquies,
In spite of real fervour, and of that
Less genuine and wrought up within myself—
I could not but bewail a wrong so harsh,
And for the Matin-bell to sound no more

Grieved, and the twilight taper, and the cross
High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign
(How welcome to the weary traveller's eyes!)
Of hospitality and peaceful rest.
And when the partner of those varied walks
Pointed upon occasion to the site
Of Romorentin, home of ancient kings,
To the imperial edifice of Blois,
Or to that rural castle, name now slipped
From my remembrance, where a lady lodged,
By the first Francis wooed, and bound to him
In chains of mutual passion, from the tower,
As a tradition of the country tells,
Practised to commune with her royal knight
By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse
'Twixt her high-seated residence and his
Far off at Chambord on the plain beneath;
Even here, though less than with the peaceful house
Religious, 'mid those frequent monuments
Of Kings, their vices and their better deeds,
Imagination, potent to inflame
At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn,
Did also often mitigate the force
Of civic prejudice, the bigotry,
So call it, of a youthful patriot's mind;

And on these spots with many gleams I looked
Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less,
Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one
Is law for all, and of that barren pride
In them who, by immunities unjust,
Between the sovereign and the people stand,
His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold
Daily upon me, mixed with pity too
And love; for where hope is, there love will be
For the abject multitude. And when we chanced
One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,
Who crept along fitting her languid gait
Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands
Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
In agitation said "'Tis against *that*
That we are fighting," I with him believed
That a benignant spirit was abroad
Which might not be withstood, that poverty
Abject as this would in a little time
Be found no more, that we should see the earth
Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,

All institutes for ever blotted out
That legalised exclusion, empty pomp
Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
Whether by edict of the one or few ;
And finally, as sum and crown of all,
Should see the people having a strong hand
In framing their own laws ; whence better days
To all mankind. But, these things set apart,
Was not this single confidence enough
To animate the mind that ever turned
A thought to human welfare ? That henceforth
Captivity by mandate without law
Should cease ; and open accusation lead
To sentence in the hearing of the world,
And open punishment, if not the air
Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man
Dread nothing. From this height I shall not stoop
To humbler matter that detained us oft
In thought or conversation, public acts,
And public persons, and emotions wrought
Within the breast, as ever-varying winds
Of record or report swept over us ;
But I might here, instead, repeat a tale,
Told by my Patriot friend, of sad events,
That prove to what low depth had struck the roots,

How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree
Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul
And black dishonour, France was weary of.

Oh, happy time of youthful lovers, (thus
The story might begin). Oh, balmy time,
In which a love-knot, on a lady's brow,
Is fairer than the fairest star in Heaven!
So might—and with that prelude *did* begin
The record; and, in faithful verse, was given
The doleful sequel.

But our little bark
On a strong river boldly hath been launched;
And from the driving current should we turn
To loiter wilfully within a creek,
Howe'er attractive, Fellow voyager!
Would'st thou not chide? Yet deem not my pains lost:
For Vaudracour and Julia (so were named
The ill-fated pair) in that plain tale will draw
Tears from the hearts of others, when their own
Shall beat no more. Thou, also, there mayst read,
At leisure, how the enamoured youth was driven,
By public power abased, to fatal crime,
Nature's rebellion against monstrous law;
How, between heart and heart, oppression thrust

Her mandates, severing whom true love had joined,
Harassing both ; until he sank and pressed
The couch his fate had made for him ; supine,
Save when the stings of viperous remorse,
Trying their strength, enforced him to start up,
Aghast and prayerless. Into a deep wood
He fled, to shun the haunts of human kind ;
There dwelt, weakened in spirit more and more ;
Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France
Full speedily resounded, public hope,
Or personal memory of his own worst wrongs,
Rouse him ; but, hidden in those gloomy shades,
His days he wasted,—an imbecile mind.

BOOK X

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE—(Continued)

BOOK TENTH

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE—(Continued)

It was a beautiful and silent day
That overspread the countenance of earth,
Then fading with unusual quietness,—
A day as beautiful as e'er was given
To soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed,
When by the gliding Loire I paused, and cast
Upon his rich domains, vineyard and tilth,
Green meadow-ground, and many-coloured woods,
Again, and yet again, a farewell look;
Then from the quiet of that scene passed on,
Bound to the fierce Metropolis. From his throne
The King had fallen, and that invading host—
Presumptuous cloud, on whose black front was written
The tender mercies of the dismal wind
That bore it—on the plains of Liberty

Had burst innocuous. Say in bolder words,
They—who had come elate as eastern hunters
Banded beneath the Great Mogul, when he
Erewhile went forth from Agra or Lahore,
Rajahs and Omrahs in his train, intent
To drive their prey enclosed within a ring
Wide as a province, but, the signal given,
Before the point of the life-threatening spear
Narrowing itself by moments—they, rash men,
Had seen the anticipated quarry turned
Into avengers, from whose wrath they fled
In terror. Disappointment and dismay
Remained for all whose fancies had run wild
With evil expectations; confidence
And perfect triumph for the better cause.

The State, as if to stamp the final seal
On her security, and to the world
Show what she was, a high and fearless soul,
Exulting in defiance, or heart-stung
By sharp resentment, or belike to taunt
With spiteful gratitude the baffled League,
That had stirred up her slackening faculties
To a new transition, when the King was crushed,
Spared not the empty throne, and in proud haste

Assumed the body and venerable name
Of a Republic. Lamentable crimes,
'Tis true, had gone before this hour, dire work
Of massacre, in which the senseless sword
Was prayed to as a judge; but these were past,
Earth free from them for ever, as was thought,—
Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once!
Things that could only show themselves and die.

Cheered with this hope, to Paris I returned,
And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt,
The spacious city, and in progress passed
The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay,
Associate with his children and his wife
In bondage; and the palace, lately stormed
With roar of cannon by a furious host.
I crossed the square (an empty area then!)
Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain
The dead, upon the dying heaped, and gazed
On this and other spots, as doth a man
Upon a volume whose contents he knows
Are memorable, but from him locked up,
Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,
And half upbraids their silence. But that night

I felt most deeply in what world I was,
What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed.
High was my room and lonely, near the roof
Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge
That would have pleased me in more quiet times;
Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres,
Divided from me by one little month,
Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up
From tragic fictions or true history,
Remembrances and dim admonishments.
The horse is taught his manage, and no star
Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
For the spent hurricane the air provides
As fierce a successor; the tide retreats
But to return out of its hiding-place
In the great deep; all things have second birth;
The earthquake is not satisfied at once;
And in this way I wrought upon myself,
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
To the whole city, "Sleep no more." The trance
Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;

But vainly comments of a calmer mind
Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.
The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

With early morning towards the Palace-walk
Of Orleans eagerly I turned; as yet
The streets were still; not so those long Arcades;
There, 'mid a peal of ill-matched sounds and cries,
That greeted me on entering, I could hear
Shrill voices from the hawkers in the throng,
Bawling, "Denunciation of the Crimes
Of Maximilian Robespierre;" the hand,
Prompt as the voice, held forth a printed speech,
The same that had been recently pronounced,
When Robespierre, not ignorant for what mark
Some words of indirect reproof had been
Intended, rose in hardihood, and dared
The man who had an ill surmise of him
To bring his charge in openness; whereat,
When a dead pause ensued, and no one stirred,
In silence of all present, from his seat
Louvet walked single through the avenue,
And took his station in the Tribune, saying,

"I, Robespierre, accuse thee!" Well is known
The inglorious issue of that charge, and how
He, who had launched the startling thunderbolt,
The one bold man, whose voice the attack had sounded,
Was left without a follower to discharge
His perilous duty, and retire lamenting
That Heaven's best aid is wasted upon men
Who to themselves are false.
But these are things
Of which I speak, only as they were storm
Or sunshine to my individual mind,
No further. Let me then relate that now—
In some sort seeing with my proper eyes
That Liberty, and Life, and Death would soon
To the remotest corners of the land
Lie in the arbitrement of those who ruled
The capital City; what was struggled for,
And by what combatants victory must be won;
The indecision on their part whose aim
Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those
Who in attack or in defence were strong
Through their impiety—my inmost soul
Was agitated; yea, I could almost
Have prayed that throughout earth upon all men,
By patient exercise of reason made

Worthy of liberty, all spirits filled
With zeal expanding in Truth's holy light,
The gift of tongues might fall, and power arrive
From the four quarters of the winds to do
For France, what without help she could not do,
A work of honour; think not that to this
I added, work of safety: from all doubt
Or trepidation for the end of things
Far was I, far as angels are from guilt.

Yet did I grieve, nor only grieved, but thought
Of opposition and of remedies:
An insignificant stranger and obscure,
And one, moreover, little graced with power
Of eloquence even in my native speech,
And all unfit for tumult or intrigue,
Yet would I at this time with willing heart
Have undertaken for a cause so great
Service however dangerous. I revolved,
How much the destiny of Man had still
Hung upon single persons; that there was,
Transcendent to all local patrimony,
One nature, as there is one sun in heaven;
That objects, even as they are great, thereby
Do come within the reach of humblest eyes;

That Man is only weak through his mistrust
And want of hope where evidence divine
Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure;
Nor did the inexperience of my youth
Preclude conviction, that a spirit strong
In hope, and trained to noble aspirations,
A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
Is for Society's unreasoning herd
A domineering instinct, serves at once
For way and guide, a fluent receptacle
That gathers up each petty straggling rill
And vein of water, glad to be rolled on
In safe obedience; that a mind, whose rest
Is where it ought to be, in self-restraint,
In circumspection and simplicity,
Falls rarely in entire discomfiture
Below its aim, or meets with, from without,
A treachery that foils it or defeats;
And, lastly, if the means on human will,
Frail human will, dependent should betray
Him who too boldly trusted them, I felt
That 'mid the loud distractions of the world
A sovereign voice subsists within the soul,
Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong,
Of life and death, in majesty severe

Enjoining, as may best promote the aims
Of truth and justice, either sacrifice,
From whatsoever region of our cares
Or our infirm affections Nature pleads,
Earnest and blind, against the stern decree.

On the other side, I called to mind those truths
That are the common-places of the schools—
(A theme for boys, too hackneyed for their sires,)
Yet, with a revelation's liveliness,
In all their comprehensive bearings known
And visible to philosophers of old,
Men who, to business of the world untrained,
Lived in the shade; and to Harmodius known
And his compeer Aristogiton, known
To Brutus—that tyrannic power is weak,
Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,
Nor the support of good or evil men
To trust in; that the godhead which is ours
Can never utterly be charmed or stilled;
That nothing hath a natural right to last
But equity and reason; that all else
Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best
Lives only by variety of disease.

Well might my wishes be intense, my thoughts
Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time
But that the virtue of one paramount mind
Would have abashed those impious crests—have quelled
Outrage and bloody power, and, in despite
Of what the People long had been and were
Through ignorance and false teaching, sadder proof
Of immaturity, and in the teeth
Of desperate opposition from without—
Have cleared a passage for just government,
And left a solid birthright to the State,
Redeemed, according to example given
By ancient lawgivers.
In this frame of mind,
Dragged by a chain of harsh necessity,
So seemed it,—now I thankfully acknowledge,
Forced by the gracious providence of Heaven,—
To England I returned, else (though assured
That I both was and must be of small weight,
No better than a landsman on the deck
Of a ship struggling with a hideous storm)
Doubtless, I should have then made common cause
With some who perished; haply perished too,
A poor mistaken and bewildered offering,—
Should to the breast of Nature have gone back,

With all my resolutions, all my hopes.
A Poet only to myself, to men
Useless, and, even, beloved Friend! a soul
To thee unknown!
Twice had the trees let fall
Their leaves, as often Winter had put on
His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge
Beat against Albion's shore, since ear of mine
Had caught the accents of my native speech
Upon our native country's sacred ground.
A patriot of the world, how could I glide
Into communion with her sylvan shades,
Erewhile my tuneful haunt? It pleased me more
To abide in the great City, where I found
The general air still busy with the stir
Of that first memorable onset made
By a strong levy of humanity
Upon the traffickers in Negro blood;
Effort which, though defeated, had recalled
To notice old forgotten principles,
And through the nation spread a novel heat
Of virtuous feeling. For myself, I own
That this particular strife had wanted power
To rivet my affections; nor did now
Its unsuccessful issue much excite

My sorrow; for I brought with me the faith
That, if France prospered, good men would not long
Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
And this most rotten branch of human shame,
Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains,
Would fall together with its parent tree.
What, then, were my emotions, when in arms
Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,
Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers!
Not in my single self alone I found,
But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
Change and subversion from that hour. No shock
Given to my moral nature had I known
Down to that very moment! neither lapse
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
A revolution, save at this one time;
All else was progress on the self-same path
On which, with a diversity of pace,
I had been travelling: this a stride at once
Into another region. As a light
And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze
On some grey rock—its birth-place—so had I
Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower
Of my beloved country, wishing not
A happier fortune than to wither there:

Now was I from that pleasant station torn
And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,
Yea, afterwards—truth most painful to record!—
Exulted, in the triumph of my soul,
When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
Left without glory on the field, or driven,
Brave hearts! to shameful flight. It was a grief,—
Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that,—
A conflict of sensations without name,
Of which *he* only, who may love the sight
Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge,
When, in the congregation bending all
To their great Father, prayers were offered up,
Or praises for our country's victories;
And, 'mid the simple worshippers, perchance
I only, like an uninvited guest
Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,
Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

Oh! much have they to account for, who could tear,
By violence, at one decisive rent,
From the best youth in England their dear pride,
Their joy, in England; this, too, at a time
In which worst losses easily might wean
The best of names, when patriotic love

Did of itself in modesty give way,
Like the Precursor when the Deity
Is come Whose harbinger he was; a time
In which apostasy from ancient faith
Seemed but conversion to a higher creed;
Withal a season dangerous and wild,
A time when sage Experience would have snatched
Flowers out of any hedge-row to compose
A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.

When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag
In that unworthy service was prepared
To mingle, I beheld the vessels lie,
A brood of gallant creatures, on the deep;
I saw them in their rest, a sojourner
Through a whole month of calm and glassy days
In that delightful island which protects
Their place of convocation—there I heard,
Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,
A monitory sound that never failed,—
The sunset cannon. While the orb went down
In the tranquillity of nature, came
That voice, ill requiem! seldom heard by me
Without a spirit overcast by dark
Imaginations, sense of woes to come,

Sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart.

In France, the men, who, for their desperate ends,
Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad
Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before
In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now ;
And thus, on every side beset with foes,
The goaded land waxed mad ; the crimes of few
Spread into madness of the many ; blasts
From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.
The sternness of the just, the faith of those
Who doubted not that Providence had times
Of vengeful retribution, theirs who throned
The human Understanding paramount
And made of that their God, the hopes of men
Who were content to barter short-lived pangs
For a paradise of ages, the blind rage
Of insolent tempers, the light vanity
Of intermeddlers, steady purposes
Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,
And all the accidents of life were pressed
Into one service, busy with one work.
The Senate stood aghast, her prudence quenched,
Her wisdom stifled, and her justice scared,
Her frenzy only active to extol

Past outrages, and shape the way for new,
Which no one dared to oppose or mitigate.

Domestic carnage now filled the whole year
With feast-days; old men from the chimney-nook,
The maiden from the bosom of her love,
The mother from the cradle of her babe,
The warrior from the field—all perished, all—
Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
Head after head, and never heads enough
For those that bade them fall. They found their joy,
They made it proudly, eager as a child,
(If like desires of innocent little ones
May with such heinous appetites be compared),
Pleased in some open field to exercise
A toy that mimics with revolving wings
The motion of a wind-mill; though the air
Do of itself blow fresh, and make the vanes
Spin in his eyesight, *that* contents him not,
But, with the plaything at arm's length, he sets
His front against the blast, and runs amain,
That it may whirl the faster.
Amid the depth
Of those enormities, even thinking minds
Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being;

Forgot that such a sound was ever heard
As Liberty upon earth: yet all beneath
Her innocent authority was wrought,
Nor could have been, without her blessed name.
The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour
Of her composure, felt that agony,
And gave it vent in her last words. O Friend!
It was a lamentable time for man,
Whether a hope had e'er been his or not;
A woful time for them whose hopes survived
The shock; most woful for those few who still
Were flattered, and had trust in human kind:
They had the deepest feeling of the grief.
Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved:
The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,
And throttled with an infant godhead's might
The snakes about her cradle; that was well,
And as it should be; yet no cure for them
Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be
Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.
Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
Were my day-thoughts,—my nights were miserable;
Through months, through years, long after the last beat
Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep
To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,

Such ghastly visions had I of despair
And tyranny, and implements of death;
And innocent victims sinking under fear,
And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer,
Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds
For sacrifice, and struggling with fond mirth
And levity in dungeons, where the dust
Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me
In long orations, which I strove to plead
Before unjust tribunals,—with a voice
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
In the last place of refuge—my own soul.

When I began in youth's delightful prime
To yield myself to Nature, when that strong
And holy passion overcame me first,
Nor day nor night, evening or morn, was free
From its oppression. But, O Power Supreme!
Without Whose call this world would cease to breathe,
Who from the fountain of Thy grace dost fill
The veins that branch through every frame of life,
Making man what he is, creature divine,
In single or in social eminence,

Above the rest raised infinite ascents
When reason that enables him to be
Is not sequestered—what a change is here !
How different ritual for this after-worship,
What countenance to promote this second love !
The first was service paid to things which lie
Guarded within the bosom of Thy will.
Therefore to serve was high beatitude ;
Tumult was therefore gladness, and the fear
Ennobling, venerable ; sleep secure,
And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams.

But as the ancient Prophets, borne aloft
In vision, yet constrained by natural laws
With them to take a troubled human heart,
Wanted not consolations, nor a creed
Of reconcilement, then when they denounced,
On towns and cities, wallowing in the abyss
Of their offences, punishment to come ;
Or saw, like other men, with bodily eyes,
Before them, in some desolated place,
The wrath consummate and the threat fulfilled ;
So, with devout humility be it said,
So, did a portion of that spirit fall
On me uplifted from the vantage-ground

Of pity and sorrow to a state of being
That through the time's exceeding fierceness saw
Glimpses of retribution, terrible,
And in the order of sublime behests :
But, even if that were not, amid the awe
Of unintelligible chastisement,
Not only acquiescences of faith
Survived, but daring sympathies with power,
Motions not treacherous or profane, else why
Within the folds of no ungentle breast
Their dread vibration to this hour prolonged ?
Wild blasts of music thus could find their way
Into the midst of turbulent events ;
So that worst tempests might be listened to.
Then was the truth received into my heart,
That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
Honour which could not else have been, a faith,
An elevation and a sanctity,
If new strength be not given nor old restored,
The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt
Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
Saying, " Behold the harvest that we reap
From popular government and equality,"
I clearly saw that neither these nor aught

Of wild belief engrafted on their names
By false philosophy had caused the woe,
But a terrific reservoir of guilt
And ignorance filled up from age to age,
That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

And as the desert hath green spots, the sea
Small islands scattered amid stormy waves,
So *that* disastrous period did not want
Bright sprinklings of all human excellence,
To which the silver wands of saints in Heaven
Might point with rapturous joy. Yet not the less,
For those examples in no age surpassed
Of fortitude and energy and love,
And human nature faithful to herself
Under worst trials, was I driven to think
Of the glad times when first I traversed France
A youthful pilgrim ; above all reviewed
That eventide, when under windows bright
With happy faces and with garlands hung,
And through a rainbow-arch that spanned the street,
Triumphal pomp for liberty confirmed,
I paced, a dear companion at my side,
The town of Arras, whence with promise high

Issued, on delegation to sustain
Humanity and right, *that* Robespierre,
He who thereafter, and in how short time!
Wielded the sceptre of the Atheist crew.
When the calamity spread far and wide—
And this same city, that did then appear
To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned
Under the vengeance of her cruel son,
As Lear reproached the winds—I could almost
Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle
For lingering yet an image in my mind
To mock me under such a strange reverse.

O Friend! few happier moments have been mine
Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe
So dreaded, so abhorred. The day deserves
A separate record. Over the smooth sands
Of Leven's ample estuary lay
My journey, and beneath a genial sun,
With distant prospect among gleams of sky
And clouds, and intermingling mountain tops,
In one inseparable glory clad,
Creatures of one ethereal substance met
In consistory, like a diadem
Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit

In the empyrean. Underneath that pomp
Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral vales
Among whose happy fields I had grown up
From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle,
That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed
Enrapt; but brightest things are wont to draw
Sad opposites out of the inner heart,
As even their pensive influence drew from mine
How could it otherwise? for not in vain
That very morning had I turned aside
To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves,
An honoured teacher of my youth was laid,
And on the stone were graven by his desire
Lines from the churchyard elegy of Gray.
This faithful guide, speaking from his death-bed,
Added no farewell to his parting counsel,
But said to me, "My head will soon lie low;"
And when I saw the turf that covered him,
After the lapse of full eight years, those words,
With sound of voice and countenance of the Man,
Came back upon me, so that some few tears
Fell from me in my own despite. But now
I thought, still traversing that widespread plain,
With tender pleasure of the verses graven
Upon his tombstone, whispering to myself:

He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,
Would have loved me, as one not destitute
Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
That he had formed, when I, at his command,
Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs.

As I advanced, all that I saw or felt
Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small
And rocky island near, a fragment stood
(Itself like a sea rock) the low remains
(With shells encrusted, dark with briny weeds)
Of a dilapidated structure, once
A Romish chapel, where the vested priest
Said matins at the hour that suited those
Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.
Not far from that still ruin all the plain
Lay spotted with a variegated crowd
Of vehicles and travellers, horse and foot,
Wading beneath the conduct of their guide
In loose procession through the shallow stream
Of inland waters ; the great sea meanwhile
Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused,
Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright
And cheerful, but the foremost of the band
As he approached, no salutation given

In the familiar language of the day,
Cried, "Robespierre is dead!"—nor was a doubt,
After strict question, left within my mind
That he and his supporters all were fallen.

Great was my transport, deep my gratitude
To everlasting Justice, by this fiat
Made manifest. "Come now, ye golden times,"
Said I forth-pouring on those open sands
A hymn of triumph: "as the morning comes
From out the bosom of the night, come ye:
Thus far our trust is verified; behold!
They who with clumsy desperation brought
A river of Blood, and preached that nothing else
Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might
Of their own helper have been swept away;
Their madness stands declared and visible;
Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth
March firmly towards righteousness and peace."—
Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how
The madding factions might be tranquillised,
And how through hardships manifold and long
The glorious renovation would proceed.
Thus interrupted by uneasy bursts
Of exultation, I pursued my way

Along that very shore which I had skimmed
In former days, when—spurring from the Vale
Of Nightshade, and St. Mary's mouldering fane,
And the stone abbot, after circuit made
In wantonness of heart, a joyous band
Of school-boys hastening to their distant home
Along the margin of the moonlight sea—
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

BOOK XI

FRANCE—(Concluded)

BOOK ELEVENTH

FRANCE—(Concluded)

From that time forth, Authority in France
Put on a milder face; Terror had ceased,
Yet every thing was wanting that might give
Courage to them who looked for good by light
Of rational Experience, for the shoots
And hopeful blossoms of a second spring:
Yet, in me, confidence was unimpaired;
The Senate's language, and the public acts
And measures of the Government, though both
Weak, and of heartless omen, had not power
To daunt me; in the People was my trust:
And, in the virtues which mine eyes had seen,
I knew that wound external could not take
Life from the young Republic; that new foes
Would only follow, in the path of shame,

Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end
Great, universal, irresistible.
This intuition led me to confound
One victory with another, higher far,—
Triumphs of unambitious peace at home,
And noiseless fortitude. Beholding still
Resistance strong as heretofore, I thought
That what was in degree the same was likewise
The same in quality,—that, as the worse
Of the two spirits then at strife remained
Untired, the better, surely, would preserve
The heart that first had roused him. Youth maintains,
In all conditions of society,
Communion more direct and intimate
With Nature,—hence, oftimes, with reason too—
Than age or manhood, even. To Nature, then,
Power had reverted: habit, custom, law,
Had left an interregnum's open space
For *her* to move about in, uncontrolled.
Hence could I see how Babel-like their task,
Who, by the recent deluge stupified,
With their whole souls went culling from the day
Its petty promises, to build a tower
For their own safety; laughed with my compeers
At gravest heads, by enmity to France

Distempered, till they found, in every blast
Forced from the street-disturbing newsman's horn,
For her great cause, record or prophecy
Of utter ruin. How might we believe
That wisdom could, in any shape, come near
Men clinging to delusions so insane?
And thus, experience proving that no few
Of our opinions had been just, we took
Like credit to ourselves where less was due,
And thought that other notions were as sound,
Yea, could not but be right, because we saw
That foolish men opposed them.
To a strain
More animated I might here give way,
And tell, since juvenile errors are my theme,
What in those days, through Britain, was performed
To turn *all* judgments out of their right course;
But this is passion over-near ourselves,
Reality too close and too intense,
And intermixed with something, in my mind,
Of scorn and condemnation personal,
That would profane the sanctity of verse.
Our Shepherds, this say merely, at that time
Acted, or seemed at least to act, like men
Thirsting to make the guardian crook of law

A tool of murder ; they who ruled the State,
Though with such awful proof before their eyes
That he, who would sow death, reaps death, or worse,
And can reap nothing better, child-like longed
To imitate, not wise enough to avoid ;
Or left (by mere timidity betrayed)
The plain straight road, for one no better chosen
Than if their wish had been to undermine
Justice, and make an end of Liberty.

But from these bitter truths I must return
To my own history. It hath been told
That I was led to take an eager part
In arguments of civil polity,
Abruptly, and indeed before my time :
I had approached, like other youths, the shield
Of human nature from the golden side,
And would have fought, even to the death, to attest
The quality of the metal which I saw.
What there is best in individual man,
Of wise in passion, and sublime in power,
Benevolent in small societies,
And great in large ones, I had oft revolved,
Felt deeply, but not thoroughly understood
By reason : nay, far from it ; they were yet,

As cause was given me afterwards to learn,
Not proof against the injuries of the day;
Lodged only at the sanctuary's door,
Not safe within its bosom. Thus prepared,
And with such general insight into evil,
And of the bounds which sever it from good,
As books and common intercourse with life
Must needs have given—to the inexperienced mind,
When the world travels in a beaten road,
Guide faithful as is needed—I began
To meditate with ardour on the rule
And management of nations; what it is
And ought to be; and strove to learn how far
Their power or weakness, wealth or poverty,
Their happiness or misery, depends
Upon their laws, and fashion of the State.

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, us who were strong in love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven! O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!

When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchantress—to assist the work,
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,
The beauty wore of promise—that which sets
(As at some moments might not be unfelt
Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The play-fellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it;—they, too, who of gentle mood
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves;—
Now was it that *both* found, the meek and lofty
Did both find helpers to their hearts' desire,

And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,—
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia,—subterranean fields,—
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,—the place where, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all!

Why should I not confess that Earth was then
To me, what an inheritance, new-fallen,
Seems, when the first time visited, to one
Who thither comes to find in it his home?
He walks about and looks upon the spot
With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulds,
And is half pleased with things that are amiss,
'Twill be such joy to see them disappear.

An active partisan, I thus convoked
From every object pleasant circumstance
To suit my ends; I moved among mankind
With genial feelings still predominant;
When erring, erring on the better part,
And in the kinder spirit; placable,
Indulgent, as not uninformed that men
See as they have been taught—Antiquity

Gives rights to error ; and aware, no less,
That throwing off oppression must be work
As well of License as of Liberty ;
And above all—for this was more than all—
Not caring if the wind did now and then
Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
Prospect so large into futurity ;
In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,
Diffusing only those affections wider
That from the cradle had grown up with me,
And losing, in no other way than light
Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

In the main outline, such it might be said
Was my condition, till with open war
Britain opposed the liberties of France.
This threw me first out of the pale of love ;
Soured and corrupted, upwards to the source,
My sentiments ; was not, as hitherto,
A swallowing up of lesser things in great,
But change of them into their contraries ;
And thus a way was opened for mistakes
And false conclusions, in degree as gross,
In kind more dangerous. What had been a pride,
Was now a shame ; my likings and my loves

Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry ;
And hence a blow that, in maturer age,
Would but have touched the judgment, struck more deep
Into sensations near the heart : meantime,
As from the first, wild theories were afloat,
To whose pretensions, sedulously urged,
I had but lent a careless ear, assured
That time was ready to set all things right,
And that the multitude, so long oppressed,
Would be oppressed no more.
But when events
Brought less encouragement, and unto these
The immediate proof of principles no more
Could be entrusted, while the events themselves,
Worn out in greatness, stripped of novelty,
Less occupied the mind, and sentiments
Could through my understanding's natural growth
No longer keep their ground, by faith maintained
Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid
Her hand upon her object—evidence
Safer, of universal application, such
As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere.

But now, become oppressors in their turn,
Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence

For one of conquest, losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for : now mounted up,
Openly in the eye of earth and heaven,
The scale of liberty. I read her doom,
With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,
But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
Of a false prophet. While resentment rose
Striving to hide, what nought could heal, the wounds
Of mortified presumption, I adhered
More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove
Their temper, strained them more ; and thus, in heat
Of contest, did opinions every day
Grow into consequence, till round my mind
They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,
The very being of the immortal soul.

This was the time, when, all things tending fast
To depravation, speculative schemes—
That promised to abstract the hopes of Man
Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
For ever in a purer element—
Found ready welcome. Tempting region *that*
For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,
Where passions had the privilege to work,
And never hear the sound of their own names.

But, speaking more in charity, the dream
Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least
With that which makes our Reason's naked self
The object of its fervour. What delight!
How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,
To look through all the frailties of the world,
And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
Infirmities of nature, time, and place,
Build social upon personal Liberty,
Which, to the blind restraints of general laws
Superior, magisterially adopts
One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed
Upon an independent intellect.
Thus expectation rose again; thus hope,
From her first ground expelled, grew proud once more.
Oft, as my thoughts were turned to human kind,
I scorned indifference; but, inflamed with thirst
Of a secure intelligence, and sick
Of other longing, I pursued what seemed
A more exalted nature; wished that Man
Should start out of his earthy, worm-like state,
And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,
Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight—
A noble aspiration! *yet* I feel
(Sustained by worthier as by wiser thoughts)

The aspiration, nor shall ever cease
To feel it;—but return we to our course.

Enough, 'tis true—could such a plea excuse
Those aberrations—had the clamorous friends
Of ancient Institutions said and done
To bring disgrace upon their very names;
Disgrace, of which, custom and written law,
And sundry moral sentiments as props
Or emanations of those institutes,
Too justly bore a part. A veil had been
Uplifted; why deceive ourselves? in sooth,
'Twas even so; and sorrow for the man
Who either had not eyes wherewith to see,
Or, seeing, had forgotten! A strong shock
Was given to old opinions; all men's minds
Had felt its power, and mine was both let loose,
Let loose and goaded. After what hath been
Already said of patriotic love,
Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern
In temperament, withal a happy man,
And therefore bold to look on painful things,
Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold,
I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent
To anatomise the frame of social life,

Yea, the whole body of society
Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend! the wish
That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes
Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words
Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth
What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,
And the errors into which I fell, betrayed
By present objects, and by reasonings false
From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn
Out of a heart that had been turned aside
From Nature's way by outward accidents,
And which was thus confounded, more and more
Misguided, and misguiding. So I fared,
Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,
Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honours; now believing,
Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of obligation, what the rule and whence
The sanction; till, demanding formal *proof*,
And seeking it in every thing, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral questions in despair.

This was the crisis of that strong disease,
This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,
Deeming our blessed reason of least use
Where wanted most: "The lordly attributes
Of will and choice," I bitterly exclaimed,
"What are they but a mockery of a Being
Who hath in no concerns of his a test
Of good and evil; knows not what to fear
Or hope for, what to covet or to shun;
And who, if those could be discerned, would yet
Be little profited, would see, and ask
Where is the obligation to enforce?
And, to acknowledged law rebellious, still,
As selfish passion urged, would act amiss;
The dupe of folly, or the slave of crime."

Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk
With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge
From indiscriminate laughter, nor sate down
In reconcilement with an utter waste
Of intellect; such sloth I could not brook,
(Too well I loved, in that my spring of life,
Pains-taking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward)
But turned to abstract science, and there sought
Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned

Where the disturbances of space and time—
Whether in matters various, properties
Inherent, or from human will and power
Derived—find no admission. Then it was—
Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!—
That the beloved Sister in whose sight
Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice
Of sudden admonition—like a brook
That did but *cross* a lonely road, and now
Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,
Companion never lost through many a league—
Maintained for me a saving intercourse
With my true self; for, though bedimmed and changed
Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
Than as a clouded and a waning moon:
She whispered still that brightness would return,
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth;
And, lastly, as hereafter will be shown,
If willing audience fail not, Nature's self,
By all varieties of human love
Assisted, led me back through opening day
To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,

Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,
Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now
In the catastrophe (for so they dream,
And nothing less), when, finally to close
And seal up all the gains of France, a Pope
Is summoned in, to crown an Emperor—
This last opprobrium, when we see a people,
That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven
For manna, take a lesson from the dog
Returning to his vomit; when the sun
That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
In exultation with a living pomp
Of clouds—his glory's natural retinue—
Hath dropped all functions by the gods bestowed,
And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
Sets like an Opera phantom.
Thus, O Friend!
Through times of honour and through times of shame
Descending, have I faithfully retraced
The perturbations of a youthful mind
Under a long-lived storm of great events—
A story destined for thy ear, who now,
Among the fallen of nations, dost abide
Where Etna, over hill and valley, casts
His shadow stretching towards Syracuse,

The city of Timoleon! Righteous Heaven!
How are the mighty prostrated! They first,
They first of all that breathe should have awaked
When the great voice was heard from out the tombs
Of ancient heroes. If I suffered grief
For ill-requited France, by many deemed
A trifler only in her proudest day;
Have been distressed to think of what she once
Promised, now is; a far more sober cause
Thine eyes must see of sorrow in the land,
To the reanimating influence lost
Of memory, to virtue lost and hope,
Though with the wreck of loftier years bestrewn.

But indignation works where hope is not,
And thou, O Friend! wilt be refreshed. There is
One great society alone on earth:
The noble Living and the noble Dead.

Thine be such converse strong and sanative,
A ladder for thy spirit to reascend
To health and joy and pure contentedness;
To me the grief confined, that thou art gone
From this last spot of earth, where Freedom now
Stands single in her only sanctuary;

A lonely wanderer art gone, by pain
Compelled and sickness, at this latter day,
This sorrowful reverse for all mankind.
I feel for thee, must utter what I feel:
The sympathies erewhile in part discharged,
Gather afresh, and will have vent again:
My own delights do scarcely seem to me
My own delights; the lordly Alps themselves,
Those rosy peaks, from which the Morning looks
Abroad on many nations, are no more
For me that image of pure gladsomeness
Which they were wont to be. Through kindred scenes,
For purpose, at a time, how different!
Thou tak'st thy way, carrying the heart and soul
That Nature gives to Poets, now by thought
Matured, and in the summer of their strength.
O! wrap him in your shades, ye giant woods,
On Etna's side; and thou, O flowery field
Of Etna! is there not some nook of thine,
From the first play-time of the infant world
Kept sacred to restorative delight,
When from afar invoked by anxious love?

Child of the mountains, among shepherds reared,
Ere yet familiar with the classic page,

I learnt to dream of Sicily ; and lo,
The gloom, that, but a moment past, was deepened
At thy command, at her command gives way ;
A pleasant promise, wafted from her shores,
Comes o'er my heart : in fancy I behold
Her seas yet smiling, her once happy vales ;
Nor can my tongue give utterance to a name
Of note belonging to that honoured isle,
Philosopher or Bard, Empedocles,
Or Archimedes, pure abstracted soul !
That does not yield a solace to my grief :
And, O Theocritus, so far have some
Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth,
By their endowments, good or great, that they
Have had, as thou reportest, miracles
Wrought for them in old time : yea, not unmoved,
When thinking on my own beloved friend,
I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed
Divine Comates, by his impious lord
Within a chest imprisoned ; how they came
Laden from blooming grove or flowery field,
And fed him there, alive, month after month,
Because the goatherd, blessed man ! had lips
Wet with the Muses' nectar.

Thus I soothe

The pensive moments by this calm fire-side,
And find a thousand bounteous images
To cheer the thoughts of those I love, and mine.
Our prayers have been accepted ; thou wilt stand
On Etna's summit, above earth and sea,
Triumphant, winning from the invaded heavens
Thoughts without bound, magnificent designs,
Worthy of poets who attuned their harps
In wood or echoing cave, for discipline
Of heroes ; or, in reverence to the gods,
'Mid temples, served by sapient priests, and choirs
Of virgins crowned with roses. Not in vain
Those temples, where they in their ruins yet
Survive for inspiration, shall attract
Thy solitary steps : and on the brink
Thou wilt recline of pastoral Arethuse ;
Or, if that fountain be in truth no more,
Then, near some other spring, which, by the name
Thou gratulatest, willingly deceived,
I see thee linger a glad votary,
And not a captive pining for his home.

BOOK XII

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

BOOK TWELFTH

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

Long time have human ignorance and guilt
Detained us, on what spectacles of woe
Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed,
And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself
And things to hope for! Not with these began
Our song, and not with these our song must end.—
Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
How without injury to take, to give
Without offence; ye who, as if to show
The wondrous influence of power gently used,

Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in silent night;
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of your shades,
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself,
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:
Oh! that I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
What ye have done for me. The morning shines,
Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns,—
I saw the Spring return, and could rejoice,
In common with the children of her love,
Piping on boughs, or sporting on fresh fields,
Or boldly seeking pleasure nearer heaven
On wings that navigate cerulean skies.
So neither were complacency, nor peace,
Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good
Through these distracted times; in Nature still

Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,
Which, when the spirit of evil reached its height,
Maintained for me a secret happiness.

This narrative, my Friend! hath chiefly told
Of intellectual power, fostering love,
Dispensing truth, and, over men and things,
Where reason yet might hesitate, diffusing
Prophetic sympathies of genial faith:
So was I favoured—such my happy lot—
Until that natural graciousness of mind
Gave way to overpressure from the times
And their disastrous issues. What availed,
When spells forbade the voyager to land,
That fragrant notice of a pleasant shore
Wafted, at intervals, from many a bower
Of blissful gratitude and fearless love?
Dare I avow that wish was mine to see,
And hope that future times *would* surely see,
The man to come, parted, as by a gulph,
From him who had been; that I could no more
Trust the elevation which had made me one
With the great family that still survives
To illuminate the abyss of ages past,
Sage, warrior, patriot, hero; for it seemed

That their best virtues were not free from taint
Of something false and weak, that could not stand
The open eye of Reason. Then I said,
Go to the Poets, they will speak to thee
More perfectly of purer creatures;—yet
If reason be nobility in man,
Can aught be more ignoble than the man
Whom they delight in, blinded as he is
By prejudice, the miserable slave
Of low ambition or distempered love?"

In such strange passion, if I may once more
Review the past, I warred against myself—
A bigot to a new idolatry—
Like a cowled monk who hath forsworn the world,
Zealously laboured to cut off my heart
From all the sources of her former strength;
And as, by simple waving of a wand,
The wizard instantaneously dissolves
Palace or grove, even so could I unsoul
As readily by syllogistic words
Those mysteries of being which have made,
And shall continue evermore to make,
Of the whole human race one brotherhood.

What wonder, then, if, to a mind so far
Perverted, even the visible Universe
Fell under the dominion of a taste
Less spiritual, with microscopic view
Was scanned, as I had scanned the moral world?

O Soul of Nature! excellent and fair!
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,
Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds
And roaring waters, and in lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, Powers on whom
I daily waited, now all eye and now
All ear; but never long without the heart
Employed, and man's unfolding intellect:
O Soul of Nature! that, by laws divine
Sustained and governed, still dost overflow
With an impassioned life, what feeble ones
Walk on this earth! how feeble have I been
When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke
Of human suffering, such as justifies
Remissness and inaptitude of mind,
But through presumption; even in pleasure pleased
Unworthily, disliking here, and there
Liking; by rules of mimic art transferred

To things above all art; but more,—for this,
Although a strong infection of the age,
Was never much my habit—giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene,
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties
Of colour and proportion; to the moods
Of time and season, to the moral power,
The affections and the spirit of the place,
Insensible. Nor only did the love
Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt
My deeper feelings, but another cause,
More subtle and less easily explained,
That almost seems inherent in the creature,
A twofold frame of body and of mind.
I speak in recollection of a time
When the bodily eye, in every stage of life
The most despotic of our senses, gained
Such strength in *me* as often held my mind
In absolute dominion. Gladly here,
Entering upon abstruser argument,
Could I endeavour to unfold the means
Which Nature studiously employs to thwart
This tyranny, summons all the senses each
To counteract the other, and themselves,

And makes them all, and the objects with which all
Are conversant, subservient in their turn
To the great ends of Liberty and Power.
But leave we this: enough that my delights
(Such as they were) were sought insatiably.
Vivid the transport, vivid though not profound;
I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,
Still craving combinations of new forms,
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,
Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced
To lay the inner faculties asleep.
Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife
And various trials of our complex being,
As we grow up, such thraldom of that sense
Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a maid,
A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds;
Her eye was not the mistress of her heart;
Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste,
Or barren intermeddling subtleties,
Perplex her mind; but, wise as women are
When genial circumstance hath favoured them,
She welcomed what was given, and craved no more;
Whate'er the scene presented to her view,
That was the best, to that she was attuned
By her benign simplicity of life,

And through a perfect happiness of soul,
Whose variegated feelings were in this
Sisters, that they were each some new delight.
Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
Could they have known her, would have loved; methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
And every thing she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them and to all creatures. God delights
In such a being; for her common thoughts
Are piety, her life is gratitude.

Even like this maid, before I was called forth
From the retirement of my native hills,
I loved whate'er I saw: nor lightly loved,
But most intensely; never dreamt of aught
More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed
Than those few nooks to which my happy feet
Were limited. I had not at that time
Lived long enough, nor in the least survived
The first diviner influence of this world,
As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.
Worshipping then among the depth of things,
As piety ordained; could I submit

To measured admiration, or to aught
That should preclude humility and love?
I felt, observed, and pondered; did not judge,
Yea, never thought of judging; with the gift
Of all this glory filled and satisfied.
And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps
Roaming, I carried with me the same heart:
In truth, the degradation—howsoe'er
Induced, effect, in whatsoe'er degree,
Of custom that prepares a partial scale
In which the little oft outweighs the great;
Or any other cause that hath been named;
Or lastly, aggravated by the times
And their impassioned sounds, which well might make
The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes
Inaudible—was transient; I had known
Too forcibly, too early in my life,
Visitings of imaginative power
For this to last: I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again
In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
A sensitive being, a *creative* soul.

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain

A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired ;
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life that give
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master — outward sense
The obedient servant of her will. Such moments
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood. I remember well,
That once, while yet my inexperienced hand
Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes
I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills :
An ancient servant of my father's house
Was with me, my encourager and guide :
We had not travelled long, ere some mischance
Disjoined me from my comrade ; and, through fear
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length

Came to a bottom, where in former times
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.
The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones
And iron case were gone; but on the turf,
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,
Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.
The monumental letters were inscribed
In times long past; but still, from year to year,
By superstition of the neighbourhood,
The grass is cleared away, and to this hour
The characters are fresh and visible:
A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,
Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road:
Then, reascending the bare common, saw
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
The beacon on the summit, and, more near,
A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
Against the blowing wind. It was, it truth,
An ordinary sight; but I should need
Colours and words that are unknown to man,
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
The beacon crowning the lone eminence,

The female and her garments vexed and tossed
By the strong wind. When, in the blessed hours
Of early love, the loved one at my side,
I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy beacon, fell
A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam;
And think ye not with radiance more sublime
For these remembrances, and for the power
They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel,
That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,
Else never canst receive. The days gone by
Return upon me almost from the dawn
Of life: the hiding-places of man's power
Open; I would approach them, but they close.
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all; and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,

Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,
Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past
For future restoration.—Yet another
Of these memorials :—
One Christmas-time,
On the glad eve of its dear holidays,
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
Into the fields, impatient for the sight
Of those led palfreys that should bear us home ;
My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,
That, from the meeting-point of two highways
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched ;
Thither, uncertain on which road to fix
My expectation, thither I repaired,
Scout-like, and gained the summit ; 'twas a day
Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass
I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall ;
Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,
Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood ;
With those companions at my side, I watched,
Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse
And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned, —
That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days

Sojourners in my father's house, he died,
And I and my three brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave. The event,
With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared
A chastisement; and when I called to mind
That day so lately past, when from the crag
I looked in such anxiety of hope;
With trite reflections of morality,
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low
To God, Who thus corrected my desires;
And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business of the elements,
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
And the bleak music from that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
That on the line of each of those two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes;
All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
As at a fountain; and on winter nights,
Down to this very time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,
While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,
Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock

In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
Some inward agitations thence are brought,
Whate'er their office, whether to beguile
Thoughts over busy in the course they took,
Or animate an hour of vacant ease.

BOOK XIII

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED—(Concluded)

BOOK THIRTEENTH

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED—(Concluded)

From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:
This is her glory; these two attributes
Are sister horns that constitute her strength.
Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange
Of peace and excitation, finds in her
His best and purest friend; from her receives
That energy by which he seeks the truth,
From her that happy stillness of the mind
Which fits him to receive it when unsought.

Such benefit the humblest intellects
Partake of, each in their degree; 'tis mine
To speak, what I myself have known and felt;
Smooth task! for words find easy way, inspired

By gratitude, and confidence in truth.
Long time in search of knowledge did I range
The field of human life, in heart and mind
Benighted; but, the dawn beginning now
To re-appear, 'twas proved that not in vain
I had been taught to reverence a Power
That is the visible quality and shape
And image of right reason; that matures
Her processes by steadfast laws; gives birth
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
No heat of passion or excessive zeal,
No vain conceits; provokes to no quick turns
Of self-applauding intellect; but trains
To meekness, and exalts by humble faith;
Holds up before the mind intoxicate
With present objects, and the busy dance
Of things that pass away, a temperate show
Of objects that endure; and by this course
Disposes her, when over-fondly set
On throwing off incumbrances, to seek
In man, and in the frame of social life,
Whate'er there is desirable and good
Of kindred permanence, unchanged in form
And function, or, through strict vicissitude
Of life and death, revolving. Above all

Were re-established now those watchful thoughts
Which, seeing little worthy or sublime
In what the Historian's pen so much delights
To blazon—power and energy detached
From moral purpose—early tutored me
To look with feelings of fraternal love
Upon the unassuming things that hold
A silent station in this beauteous world.

Thus moderated, thus composed, I found
Once more in Man an object of delight,
Of pure imagination, and of love;
And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,
Again I took the intellectual eye
For my instructor, studious more to see
Great truths, than touch and handle little ones.
Knowledge was given accordingly; my trust
Became more firm in feelings that had stood
The test of such a trial; clearer far
My sense of excellence—of right and wrong:
The promise of the present time retired
Into its true proportion; sanguine schemes,
Ambitious projects, pleased me less; I sought
For present good in life's familiar face,
And built thereon my hopes of good to come.

With settling judgments now of what would last
And what would disappear; prepared to find
Presumption, folly, madness, in the men
Who thrust themselves upon the passive world
As Rulers of the world; to see in these,
Even when the public welfare is their aim,
Plans without thought, or built on theories
Vague and unsound; and having brought the books
Of modern statists to their proper test,
Life, human life, with all its sacred claims
Of sex and age, and heaven-descended rights,
Mortal, or those beyond the reach of death;
And having thus discerned how dire a thing
Is worshipped in that idol proudly named
"The Wealth of Nations," *where* alone that wealth
Is lodged, and how increased; and having gained
A more judicious knowledge of the worth
And dignity of individual man,
No composition of the brain, but man
Of whom we read, the man whom we behold
With our own eyes—I could not but inquire—
Not with less interest than heretofore,
But greater, though in spirit more subdued—
Why is this glorious creature to be found
One only in ten thousand? What one is,

Why may not millions be? What bars are thrown
By Nature in the way of such a hope?
Our animal appetites and daily wants,
Are these obstructions insurmountable?
If not, then others vanish into air.
"Inspect the basis of the social pile:
Inquire," said I, "how much of mental power
And genuine virtue they possess who live
By bodily toil, labour exceeding far
Their due proportion, under all the weight
Of that injustice which upon ourselves
Ourselves entail." Such estimate to frame
I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?)
Among the natural abodes of men,
Fields with their rural works; recalled to mind
My earliest notices; with these compared
The observations made in later youth,
And to that day continued.—For, the time
Had never been when throes of mighty Nations
And the world's tumult unto me could yield,
How far soe'er transported and possessed,
Full measure of content; but still I craved
An intermingling of distinct regards
And truths of individual sympathy
Nearer ourselves. Such often might be gleaned

From the great City, else it must have proved
To me a heart-depressing wilderness;
But much was wanting: therefore did I turn
To you, ye pathways, and ye lonely roads;
Sought you enriched with everything I prized,
With human kindnesses and simple joys.

Oh! next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed
Alas! to few in this untoward world,
The bliss of walking daily in life's prime
Through field or forest with the maid we love,
While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe
Nothing but happiness, in some lone nook,
Deep vale, or any where, the home of both,
From which it would be misery to stir:
Oh! next to such enjoyment of our youth,
In my esteem, next to such dear delight,
Was that of wandering on from day to day
Where I could meditate in peace, and cull
Knowledge that step by step might lead me on
To wisdom; or, as lightsome as a bird
Wafted upon the wind from distant lands,
Sing notes of greeting to strange fields or groves,
Which lacked not voice to welcome me in turn:
And, when that pleasant toil had ceased to please,

Converse with men, where if we meet a face
We almost meet a friend, on naked heaths
With long long ways before, by cottage bench,
Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.

Who doth not love to follow with his eye
The windings of a public way? the sight,
Familiar object as it is, hath wrought
On my imagination since the morn
Of childhood, when a disappearing line,
One daily present to my eyes, that crossed
The naked summit of a far-off hill
Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,
Was like an invitation into space
Boundless, or guide into eternity.
Yes, something of the grandeur which invests
The mariner who sails the roaring sea
Through storm and darkness, early in my mind
Surrounded, too, the wanderers of the earth;
Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more.
Awed have I been by strolling Bedlamites;
From many other uncouth vagrants (passed
In fear) have walked with quicker step; but why
Take note of this? When I began to enquire,
To watch and question those I met, and speak

Without reserve to them, the lonely roads
Were open schools in which I daily read
With most delight the passions of mankind,
Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed ;
There saw into the depth of human souls,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes. And—now convinced at heart
How little those formalities, to which
With overweening trust alone we give
The name of Education, have to do
With real feeling and just sense ; how vain
A correspondence with the talking world
Proves to the most ; and called to make good search
If man's estate, by doom of Nature yoked
With toil, be therefore yoked with ignorance ;
If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,
And intellectual strength so rare a boon—
I prized such walks still more, for there I found
Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace
And steadiness, and healing and repose
To every angry passion. There I heard,
From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
Replete with honour ; sounds in unison
With loftiest promises of good and fair.

There are who think that strong affection, love
Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed
A gift, to use a term which they would use,
Of vulgar nature; that its growth requires
Retirement, leisure, language purified
By manners studied and elaborate;
That whoso feels such passion in its strength
Must live within the very light and air
Of courteous usages refined by art.
True is it, where oppression worse than death
Salutes the being at his birth, where grace
Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
And poverty and labour in excess
From day to day pre-occupy the ground
Of the affections, and to Nature's self
Oppose a deeper nature; there, indeed,
Love cannot be; nor does it thrive with ease
Among the close and overcrowded haunts
Of cities, where the human heart is sick,
And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed.
—Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel
How we mislead each other; above all,
How books mislead us, seeking their reward
From judgments of the wealthy Few, who see
By artificial lights; how they debase

The Many for the pleasure of those Few ;
Effeminately level down the truth
To certain general notions, for the sake
Of being understood at once, or else
Through want of better knowledge in the heads
That framed them ; flattering self-conceit with words,
That, while they most ambitiously set forth
Extrinsic differences, the outward marks
Whereby society has parted man
From man, neglect the universal heart.

Here, calling up to mind what then I saw,
A youthful traveller, and see daily now
In the familiar circuit of my home,
Here might I pause, and bend in reverence
To Nature, and the power of human minds,
To men as they are men within themselves.
How oft high service is performed within,
When all the external man is rude in show,—
Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,
But a mere mountain chapel, that protects
Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.
Of these, said I, shall be my song ; of these,
If future years mature me for the task,
Will I record the praises, making verse

Deal boldly with substantial things; in truth
And sanctity of passion, speak of these,
That justice may be done, obeisance paid
Where it is due: thus haply shall I teach,
Inspire, through unadulterated ears
Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope,—my theme
No other than the very heart of man,
As found among the best of those who live,
Not unexalted by religious faith,
Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few,
In Nature's presence thence may I select
Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;
And miserable love, that is not pain
To hear of, for the glory that redounds
Therefrom to human kind, and what we are.
Be mine to follow with no timid step
Where knowledge leads me: it shall be my pride
That I have dared to tread this holy ground,
Speaking no dream, but things oracular;
Matter not lightly to be heard by those
Who to the letter of the outward promise
Do read the invisible soul; by men adroit
In speech, and for communion with the world
Accomplished; minds whose faculties are then
Most active when they are most eloquent,

And elevated most when most admired.
Men may be found of other mould than these,
Who are their own upholders, to themselves
Encouragement, and energy, and will,
Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words
As native passion dictates. Others, too,
There are among the walks of homely life
Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase;
Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse:
Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image, and the silent joy:
Words are but under-agents in their souls;
When they are grasping with their greatest strength,
They do not breathe among them: this I speak
In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts
For His own service; knoweth, loveth us,
When we are unregarded by the world.

Also, about this time did I receive
Convictions still more strong than heretofore,
Not only that the inner frame is good,
And graciously composed, but that, no less,
Nature for all conditions wants not power

To consecrate, if we have eyes to see,
The outside of her creatures, and to breathe
Grandeur upon the very humblest face
Of human life. I felt that the array
Of act and circumstance, and visible form,
Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind
What passion makes them; that meanwhile the forms
Of Nature have a passion in themselves,
That intermingles with those works of man
To which she summons him; although the works
Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own;
And that the Genius of the Poet hence
May boldly take his way among mankind
Wherever Nature leads; that he hath stood
By Nature's side among the men of old,
And so shall stand for ever. Dearest Friend!
If thou partake the animating faith
That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
Have each his own peculiar faculty,
Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive
Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame
The humblest of this band who dares to hope
That unto him hath also been vouchsafed
An insight that in some sort he possesses,

A privilege whereby a work of his,
Proceeding from a source of untaught things,
Creative and enduring, may become
A power like one of Nature's. To a hope
Not less ambitious once among the wilds
Of Sarum's Plain, my youthful spirit was raised;
There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs
Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads
Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,
Time with his retinue of ages fled
Backwards, nor checked his flight until I saw
Our dim ancestral Past in vision clear;
Saw multitudes of men, and, here and there,
A single Briton clothed in wolf-skin vest,
With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold;
The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear
Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength,
Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.
I called on Darkness—but before the word
Was uttered, midnight darkness seemed to take
All objects from my sight; and lo! again
The Desert visible by dismal flames;
It is the sacrificial altar, fed
With living men—how deep the groans! the voice
Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills

The monumental hillocks, and the pomp
Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.
At other moments (for through that wide waste
Three summer days I roamed) where'er the Plain
Was figured o'er with circles, lines, or mounds,
That yet survive, a work, as some divine,
Shaped by the Druids, so to represent
Their knowledge of the heavens, and image forth
The constellations; gently was I charmed
Into a waking dream, a reverie
That, with believing eyes, where'er I turned,
Beheld long-bearded teachers, with white wands
Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,
Alternately, and plain below, while breath
Of music swayed their motions, and the waste
Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet sounds.

This for the past, and things that may be viewed
Or fancied in the obscurity of years
From monumental hints: and thou, O Friend!
Pleased with some unpremeditated strains
That served those wanderings to beguile, hast said
That then and there my mind had exercised
Upon the vulgar forms of present things,
The actual world of our familiar days,

Yet higher power; had caught from them a tone,
An image, and a character, by books
Not hitherto reflected. Call we this
A partial judgment—and yet why? for *then*
We were as strangers; and I may not speak
Thus wrongfully of verse, however rude,
Which on thy young imagination, trained
In the great City, broke like light from far.
Moreover, each man's Mind is to herself
Witness and judge; and I remember well
That in life's every-day appearances
I seemed about this time to gain clear sight
Of a new world—a world, too, that was fit
To be transmitted, and to other eyes
Made visible; as ruled by those fixed laws
Whence spiritual dignity originates,
Which do both give it being and maintain
A balance, an ennobling interchange
Of action from without and from within;
The excellence, pure function, and best power
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

BOOK XIV

CONCLUSION

BOOK FOURTEENTH

CONCLUSION

In one of those excursions (may they ne'er
Fade from remembrance!) through the Northern tracts
Of Cambria ranging with a youthful friend,
I left Bethgelert's huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way, to see the sun
Rise from the top of Snowdon. To the door
Of a rude cottage at the mountain's base
We came, and roused the shepherd who attends
The adventurous stranger's steps, a trusty guide;
Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth.
It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,
Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky;
But, undiscouraged, we began to climb

The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round,
And, after ordinary travellers' talk
With our conductor, pensively we sank
Each into commerce with his private thoughts:
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
Was nothing either seen or heard that checked
Those musings or diverted, save that once
The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,
Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased
His coiled-up prey with barkings turbulent.
This small adventure, for even such it seemed
In that wild place and at the dead of night,
Being over and forgotten, on we wound
In silence as before. With forehead bent
Earthward, as if in opposition set
Against an enemy, I panted up
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.
Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,
Ascending at loose distance each from each,
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band;
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,
For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,

The Moon hung naked in a firmament
Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
All over this still ocean ; and beyond,
Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.
Not so the ethereal vault ; encroachment none
Was there, nor loss ; only the inferior stars
Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon,
Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay
All meek and silent, save that through a rift—
Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place—
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice !
Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,
For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.

When into air had partially dissolved

That vision, given to spirits of the night
And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought
Reflected, it appeared to me the type
Of a majestic intellect, its acts
And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.
There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power.
In sense conducting to ideal form,
In soul of more than mortal privilege.
One function, above all, of such a mind
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,
'Mid circumstances awful and sublime,
That mutual domination which she loves
To exert upon the face of outward things
So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed
With interchangeable supremacy,
That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive,
And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express

Resemblance of that glorious faculty
That higher minds bear with them as their own.
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With the whole compass of the universe :
They from their native selves can send abroad
Kindred mutations ; for themselves create
A like existence ; and, whene'er it dawns
Created for them, catch it, or are caught
By its inevitable mastery,
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.
Them the enduring and the transient both
Serve to exalt ; they build up greatest things
From least suggestions ; ever on the watch,
Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
They need not extraordinary calls
To rouse them ; in a world of a life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.
Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are Powers ; and hence the highest bliss

That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness
Of Whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image and through every thought,
And all affections by communion raised
From earth to heaven, from human to divine;
Hence endless occupation for the Soul,
Whether discursive or intuitive;
Hence cheerfulness for acts of daily life,
Emotions which best foresight need not fear,
Most worthy then of trust when most intense.
Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush
Our hearts—if here the words of Holy Writ
May with fit reverence be applied—that peace
Which passeth understanding, that repose
In moral judgments which from this pure source
Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.

Oh! who is he that hath his whole life long
Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?
For this alone is genuine liberty:
Where is the favoured being who hath held
That course unchecked, unerring, and untired,
In one perpetual progress smooth and bright?—
A humbler destiny have we retraced,
And told of lapse and hesitating choice,

And backward wanderings along thorny ways:
Yet—compassed round by mountain solitudes,
Within whose solemn temple I received
My earliest visitations, careless then
Of what was given me; and which now I range,
A meditative, oft a suffering man—
Do I declare—in accents which, from truth
Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend
Their modulation with these vocal streams—
That, whatsoever falls my better mind,
Revolving with the accidents of life,
May have sustained, that, howsoe'er misled,
Never did I, in quest of right and wrong,
Tamper with conscience from a private aim;
Nor was in any public hope the dupe
Of selfish passions; nor did ever yield
Wilfully to mean cares or low pursuits,
But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy
From every combination which might aid
The tendency, too potent in itself,
Of use and custom to bow down the soul
Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
And substitute a universe of death
For that which moves with light and life informed,
Actual, divine, and true. To fear and love,

To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends,
Be this ascribed; to early intercourse,
In presence of sublime or beautiful forms,
With the adverse principles of pain and joy—
Evil as one is rashly named by men
Who know not what they speak. By love subsists
All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;
That gone, we are as dust.—Behold the fields
In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers
And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb
And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
Shall touch thee to the heart; thou callest this love,
And not inaptly so, for love it is,
Far as it carries thee. In some green bower
Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
The One who is thy choice of all the world:
There linger, listening, gazing, with delight
Impassioned, but delight how pitiable!
Unless this love by a still higher love
Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
Lifted, in union with the purest, best,
Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
Without Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And Reason in her most exalted mood.
This faculty hath been the feeding source
Of our long labour: we have traced the stream
From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard
Its natal murmur; followed it to light
And open day; accompanied its course
Among the ways of Nature, for a time
Lost sight of it bewildered and engulphed:
Then given it greeting as it rose once more
In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
The works of man and face of human life;
And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human Being, Eternity, and God.

Imagination having been our theme,
So also hath that intellectual Love,
For they are each in each, and cannot stand
Dividually.—Here must thou be, O Man!
Power to thyself; no Helper hast thou here;
Here keepest thou in singleness thy state:

No other can divide with thee this work :
No secondary hand can intervene
To fashion this ability ; 'tis thine,
The prime and vital principle is thine
In the recesses of thy nature, far
From any reach of outward fellowship,
Else is not thine at all. But joy to him,
Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid
Here, the foundation of his future years !
For all that friendship, all that love can do,
All that a darling countenance can look
Or dear voice utter, to complete the man,
Perfect him, made imperfect in himself,
All shall be his : and he whose soul hath risen
Up to the height of feeling intellect
Shall want no humbler tenderness ; his heart
Be tender as a nursing mother's heart ;
Of female softness shall his life be full,
Of humble cares and delicate desires,
Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.

Child of my parents ! Sister of my soul !
Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere
Poured out for all the early tenderness
Which I from thee imbibed : and 'tis most true

That later seasons owed to thee no less;
For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch
Of kindred hands that opened out the springs
Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite
Of all that unassisted I had marked
In life or nature of those charms minute
That win their way into the heart by stealth
(Still to the very going-out of youth),
I too exclusively esteemed *that* love,
And sought *that* beauty, which, as Milton sings,
Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
This over-sternness; but for thee, dear Friend!
My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood
In her original self too confident,
Retained too long a countenance severe;
A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
Familiar, and a favourite of the stars:
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
And teach the little birds to build their nests
And warble in its chambers. At a time
When Nature, destined to remain so long
Foremost in my affections, had fallen back
Into a second place, pleased to become
A handmaid to a nobler than herself,

When every day brought with it some new sense
Of exquisite regard for common things,
And all the earth was budding with these gifts
Of more refined humanity, thy breath,
Dear Sister! was a kind of gentler spring
That went before my steps. Thereafter came
One whom with thee friendship had early paired;
She came, no more a phantom to adorn
A moment, but an inmate of the heart,
And yet a spirit, there for me enshrined
To penetrate the lofty and the low;
Even as one essence of pervading light
Shines, in the brightest of ten thousand stars,
And, the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp
Couched in the dewy grass.
With such a theme,
Coleridge! with this my argument, of thee
Shall I be silent? O capacious Soul!
Placed on this earth to love and understand,
And from thy presence shed the light of love,
Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of?
Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way. Thus fear relaxed
Her overweening grasp; thus thoughts and things
In the self-haunting spirit learned to take

More rational proportions; mystery,
The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,
Of life and death, time and eternity,
Admitted more habitually a mild
Interposition—a serene delight
In closelier gathering cares, such as become
A human creature, howsoe'er endowed,
Poet, or destined for a humbler name;
And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
The rapture of the hallelujah sent
From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed
And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust
In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay
Of Providence; and in reverence for duty,
Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there
Strewing in peace life's humblest ground with herbs,
At every season green, sweet at all hours.

And now, O Friend! this history is brought
To its appointed close: the discipline
And consummation of a Poet's mind,
In everything that stood most prominent,
Have faithfully been pictured; we have reached
The time (our guiding object from the first)
When we may, not presumptuously, I hope,

Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such
My knowledge, as to make me capable
Of building up a Work that shall endure.
Yet much hath been omitted, as need was;
Of books how much! and even of the other wealth
That is collected among woods and fields,
Far more: for Nature's secondary grace
Hath hitherto been barely touched upon,
The charm more superficial that attends
Her works, as they present to Fancy's choice
Apt illustrations of the moral world,
Caught at a glance, or traced with curious pains.

Finally, and above all, O Friend! (I speak
With due regret) how much is overlooked
In human nature and her subtle ways,
As studied first in our own hearts, and then
In life among the passions of mankind,
Varying their composition and their hue,
Where'er we move, under the diverse shapes
That individual character presents
To an attentive eye. For progress meet,
Along this intricate and difficult path,
Whate'er was wanting, something had I gained,
As one of many schoolfellows compelled,

In hardy independence, to stand up
Amid conflicting interests, and the shock
Of various tempers; to endure and note
What was not understood, though known to be;
Among the mysteries of love and hate,
Honour and shame, looking to right and left,
Unchecked by innocence too delicate,
And moral notions too intolerant,
Sympathies too contracted. Hence, when called
To take a station among men, the step
Was easier, the transition more secure,
More profitable also; for, the mind
Learns from such timely exercise to keep
In wholesome separation the two natures,
The one that feels, the other that observes.

Yet one word more of personal concern—
Since I withdrew unwillingly from France,
I led an undomestic wanderer's life,
In London chiefly harboured, whence I roamed,
Tarrying at will in many a pleasant spot
Of rural England's cultivated vales
Or Cambrian solitudes. A youth—(he bore
The name of Calvert—it shall live, if words
Of mine can give it life,) in firm belief

That by endowments not from me withheld
Good might be furthered—in his last decay
By a bequest sufficient for my needs
Enabled me to pause for choice, and walk
At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon
By mortal cares. Himself no Poet, yet
Far less a common follower of the world,
He deemed that my pursuits and labours lay
Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even
A necessary maintenance insures,
Without some hazard to the finer sense;
He cleared a passage for me, and the stream
Flowed in the bent of Nature.
Having now
Told what best merits mention, further pains
Our present purpose seems not to require,
And I have other tasks. Recall to mind
The mood in which this labour was begun,
O Friend! The termination of my course
Is nearer now, much nearer; yet, even then,
In that distraction and intense desire,
I said unto the life which I had lived,
Where art thou? Hear I not a voice from thee
Which 'tis reproach to hear? Anon I rose
As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched

Vast prospect of the world which I had been
And was; and hence this Song, which like a lark
I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens
Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
To earth attempered and her deep-drawn sighs,
Yet centring all in love, and in the end
All gratulant, if rightly understood.

Whether to me shall be allotted life,
And, with life, power to accomplish aught of worth,
That will be deemed no insufficient plea
For having given the story of myself,
Is all uncertain: but, beloved Friend!
When, looking back, thou seest, in clearer view
Than any liveliest sight of yesterday,
That summer, under whose indulgent skies,
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan combs,
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel;
And I, associate with such labour, steeped
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,
Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,

After the perils of his moonlight ride,
Near the loud waterfall; or her who sate
In misery near the miserable Thorn;
When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts,
And hast before thee all which then we were,
To thee, in memory of that happiness,
It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend!
Felt, that the history of a Poet's mind
Is labour not unworthy of regard:
To thee the work shall justify itself.

The last and later portions of this gift
Have been prepared, not with the buoyant spirits
That were our daily portion when we first
Together wantoned in wild Poesy,
But, under pressure of a private grief,
Keen and enduring, which the mind and heart,
That in this meditative history
Have been laid open, needs must make me feel
More deeply, yet enable me to bear
More firmly; and a comfort now hath risen
From hope that thou art near, and wilt be soon
Restored to us in renovated health;
When, after the first mingling of our tears,

'Mong other consolations, we may draw
Some pleasure from this offering of my love.

Oh! yet a few short years of useful life,
And all will be complete, thy race be run,
Thy monument of glory will be raised;
Then, though (too weak to tread the ways of truth)
This age fall back to old idolatry,
Though men return to servitude as fast
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
By nations sink together, we shall still
Find solace—knowing what we have learnt to know,
Rich in true happiness if allowed to be
Faithful alike in forwarding a day
Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work
(Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe)
Of their deliverance, surely yet to come.
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things

(Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine.

TO A GENTLEMAN [W. WORDSWORTH]

COMPOSED ON THE NIGHT AFTER HIS RECITATION
OF A POEM ON THE GROWTH OF
AN INDIVIDUAL MIND

Friend of the wise! and teacher of the good!
Into my heart have I received that lay
More than historic, that prophetic lay
Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
Of the foundations and the building up
Of a Human Spirit thou hast dared to tell
What may be told, to the understanding mind
Revealable; and what within the mind
By vital breathings secret as the soul
Of vernal growth, oft quickens in the heart
Thoughts all too deep for words!—
Theme hard as high,
Of smiles spontaneous, and mysterious fears
(The first-born they of Reason and twin-birth),
Of tides obedient to external force,

And currents self-determined, as might seem,
Or by some inner power; of moments awful,
Now in thy inner life, and now abroad,
When power streamed from thee, and thy soul received
The light reflected, as a light bestowed—
Of fancies fair, and milder hours of youth,
Hyblean murmurs of poetic thought
Industrious in its joy, in vales and glens,
Native or outland, lakes and famous hills!
Or on the lonely high-road, when the stars
Were rising; or by secret mountain-streams,
The guides and the companions of thy way!

Of more than Fancy, of the Social Sense
Distending wide, and man beloved as man,
Where France in all her towns lay vibrating
Like some becalmed bark beneath the burst
Of Heaven's immediate thunder, when no cloud
Is visible, or shadow on the main.
For thou wert there, thine own brows garlanded,
Amid the tremor of a realm aglow,
Amid a mighty nation jubilant,
When from the general heart of humankind
Hope sprang forth like a full-born Deity!
——Of that dear Hope afflicted and struck down,

So summoned homeward, thenceforth calm and sure
From the dread watch-tower of man's absolute self,
With light unwaning on her eyes, to look
Far on—herself a glory to behold,
The Angel of the vision! Then (last strain)
Of Duty, chosen laws controlling choice,
Action and joy!—An Orphic song indeed,
A song divine of high and passionate thoughts
To their own music chaunted!

O great Bard!
Ere yet that last strain dying awed the air,
With steadfast eye I viewed thee in the choir
Of ever-enduring men. The truly great
Have all one age, and from one visible space
Shed influence! They, both in power and act,
Are permanent, and Time is not with *them*,
Save as it worketh *for* them, they *in* it.
Nor less a sacred roll, than those of old,
And to be placed, as they, with gradual fame
Among the archives of mankind, thy work
Makes audible a linked lay of Truth,
Of Truth profound a sweet continuous lay,
Not learnt, but native, her own natural notes!
Ah! as I listen'd with a heart forlorn,

The pulses of my being beat anew :
And even as life returns upon the drowned,
Life's joy rekindling roused a throng of pains—
Keen pangs of Love, awakening as a babe
Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart ;
And fears self-willed, that shunned the eye of hope ;
And hope that scarce would know itself from fear ;
Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain ;
And all which I had culled in wood-walks wild,
And all which patient toil had reared, and all,
Commune with *thee* had opened out—but flowers
Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier,
In the same coffin, for the self-same grave !

That way no more ! and ill beseems it me,
Who came a welcomer in herald's guise,
Singing of glory, and futurity,
To wander back on such unhealthful road,
Plucking the poisons of self-harm ! And ill
Such intertwine beseems triumphal wreaths
Strewed before *thy* advancing !

Nor do thou,
Sage Bard ! impair the memory of that hour
Of thy communion with my nobler mind

By pity or grief, already felt too long!
Nor let my words import more blame than needs.
The tumult rose and ceased: for peace is nigh
Where wisdom's voice has found a listening heart.
Amid the howl of more than wintry storms,
The halcyon hears the voice of vernal hours
Already on the wing.
Eve following eve,
Dear tranquil time, when the sweet sense of Home
Is sweetest! moments for their own sake hailed,
And more desired, more precious for thy song,
In silence listening, like a devout child,
My soul lay passive, by thy various strain
Driven as in surges now beneath the stars,
With momentary stars of my own birth,
Fair constellated foam,* still darting off
Into the darkness; now a tranquil sea,
Outspread and bright, yet swelling to the moon.

And when—O Friend! my comforter and guide!

* "A beautiful white cloud of foam at momentary intervals coursed by the side of the vessel with a roar, and little stars of flame danced and sparkled and went out in it: and every now and then light detachments of this white cloud-like foam darted off from the vessel's side, each with its own small constellation, over the sea, and scoured out of sight like a Tartar troop over a wilderness."—*The Friend*, p. 220.

Strong in thyself, and powerful to give strength!—
Thy long-sustained Song finally closed,
And thy deep voice had ceased—yet thou thyself
Wert still before my eyes, and round us both
That happy vision of beloved faces—
Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close
I sate, my being blended in one thought
(Thought was it? or aspiration? or resolve?)
Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound—
And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.

NOTES

THE 'ADVERTISEMENT'

The *Advertisement* was written by Mr. Carter, Wordsworth's secretary, and one of his literary executors.

The title of the poem. The title—'The Prelude'—was suggested by Mrs. Wordsworth. Wordsworth himself had neglected to give his work a title, referring to it as the "poem on my own earlier life," or by some similar phrase. Dorothy Wordsworth mentions it in her journal as "the poem to Coleridge." The sub-title occurs in a letter written by Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont, under date "Grasmere, Dec. 25, 1804, . . . a poem (in which I am at present chiefly engaged) *on my earlier life, or the growth of my mind.*" Coleridge's 'Lines to a Gentleman : composed on the Night after . . .' were written in Jan. 1807, when he was staying in the farmhouse at Coleorton, Leicestershire, which Sir George Beaumont had lent to the Wordsworths for the winter of 1806–7.

Dates of composition. "Commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the summer of 1805"—so the *Advertisement.* In the poem itself Wordsworth tells us that : (1) the "preamble," or ll. 1–45 of Book I., was written at Goslar (vii. ll. i–4) ; (2) Book VI. was written in the spring of 1804 (vi. ll. 48–9, and vii. l. 12) ; and Book VII. was begun in the autumn of the same year, 1804 (vii. ll. 16–26). He further tells us how the gap between the "preamble," written in

Feb. 1799, and Book VI., written in the "primrose-time" of 1804, was filled up. After the "short-lived transport" which produced the "preamble" had disappeared like a summer torrent, a "less impetuous stream" broke forth,

> "That flowed awhile with unabating strength,
> Then stopped for years; not audible again
> Before last primrose-time." (Book VII. ll. 1–12.)

External evidence permits us to give definitiveness to this statement. The Wordsworths settled at Grasmere on Dec. 21, 1799, and in the following year Book I. of 'The Recluse' ('Home at Grasmere'), and probably Books I. and II. of 'The Prelude' were completed. This, then, was the "less impetuous stream." It appears, from Dorothy Wordsworth's *Diary*, that 'The Prelude' was temporarily resumed during the interval between the cessation of the second impulse and the spring of 1804; since she writes that on Jan. 11, 1803, Wordsworth was engaged upon "the poem to Coleridge." But no continuous effort was made until the beginning of 1804. On Feb. 13, Dorothy writes to Mrs. Clarkson that Wordsworth is "going on with great rapidity." On March 6, Wordsworth himself wrote to De Quincey that he had written four Books, or 2500 lines. On April 29 he wrote to Richard Sharpe that he had reached the seventh Book. Then once more the impulse died away, and he was "at rest through the whole summer." It returned with "the gathering of the choir of redbreasts"; and Books VIII. to XI. were completed by the end of the year. The work of composition was then carried forward continuously, and by the end of May 1805 'The Prelude' was finished. It was, therefore, virtually the poetic output of a year and a half—1804 to May 20, 1805.

Final corrections in the text were made by Wordsworth himself in 1832.

See also *Introd.* pp. xxii and xxiv.

BOOK I

l. 7. *From the vast city.* Not Goslar, but London. Although these lines were written when leaving Goslar under the circumstances already noted (*Introd.* p. xxii), Wordsworth has in his mind the relief which came to him through Raisley Calvert's legacy. His "freedom" dates from his consequent ability to leave London, where he was endeavouring to earn a livelihood by writing for the press, and devote himself to poetry (*Introd.* p. 379). Upon his return from Germany, he finally settled at Grasmere in his native Lakeland. Although he is in Germany now, he goes back in thought to rural England : just as in 'Lucy Gray'—also among the pieces composed during this winter in Germany (1798–9)—the scene is laid in the moors outside of Halifax, in Yorkshire.

l. 46. *Thus far, O Friend !* At this point the composition of the poem is resumed at Grasmere (see note to *Advertisement*, p. 379). The "friend" is, of course, Coleridge.

l. 60. *I paced on . . . 'Twas autumn.* Wordsworth lived with the Hutchinsons at Sockburn-on-Tees, near Darlington, during most of the year 1799, after his return from Germany. From this point he made expeditions to the Lakes with his brother John and Coleridge.

l. 71. *Till choice was made.* It was while staying at Sockburn that he decided to settle at Grasmere, where he took Dove Cottage.

l. 106. *A pleasant loitering journey*, i. e. from Sockburn to Dove Cottage, the "hermitage" at Grasmere (December 19–21, 1799).

ll. 114–269. These lines express Wordsworth's desire to write the great philosophic poem which he resumed at Grasmere in 1800 —'The Recluse,' and his debates with himself as to the form and subject of the work. 'The Recluse' was not destined to be completed (see *Introd.* p. xxxiii).

l. 187. Mithridates VI. (Eupator), *c.* 131 B.C.—63 B.C., King of Pontus, one of the most formidable of the enemies of

republican Rome. Defeated by Pompeius the Great (B.C. 66), he fled north to the Palus Mæotis (Sea of Azoff), and the Cimmerian Bosporus, and there conceived the idea of raising the Scythian and other barbarian peoples, and leading them by the north and west coasts of the Euxine (the Black Sea) to attack the Roman possessions and threaten Italy. He was prevented from executing this plan by the revolt of his favourite son Pharnaces. The circumstances of his death are notorious. He attempted to commit suicide by taking poison, which he carried about with him for this purpose. His system, however, had been so fortified by antidotes that the poison failed to take effect, and he was compelled to summon one of his Gaulish mercenaries to deal the death-blow. As for the suggestion that Mithridates, "hidden in the cloud of years," became Odin, Gibbon writes :—

"It is supposed that Odin was the chief of a tribe of barbarians which dwelt on the banks of the lake Mæotis, till the fall of Mithridates and the arms of Pompey menaced the north with servitude. That Odin, yielding with indignant fury to a power which he was unable to resist, conducted his tribe from the frontiers of the Asiatic Sarmatia into Sweden, with the great design of forming, in that inaccessible retreat of freedom, a religion and a people, which, in some remote age, might be subservient to his immortal revenge ; when his invincible Goths, armed with martial fanaticism, should issue in numerous swarms from the neighbourhood of the Polar circle, to chastise the oppressors of mankind."

And in a note he adds :—

"This wonderful expedition of Odin, which, by deducing the enmity of the Goths and Romans from so memorable a cause, might supply the noble groundwork of an Epic poem, cannot safely be received as authentic history." (*Decline and Fall*, ch. x.)

l. 191. Sertorius in the Civil War took the side of Marius, and upon the victory of the Optimates, and the return of Sulla in B.C. 83, retired with a small following through Gaul and across the Pyrenees into Spain. He was then compelled by Luscus,

Sulla's pro-consul, to retreat from Spain to Mauritania, whence he subsequently returned to the mouth of the Guadalquivir. Some sailors, returned from the Atlantic Islands, *i. e.* Madeira and Porto Santo, or possibly the Canaries, gave him so favourable a description of these "fortunate isles" that he was said to have been inspired with "a strong desire to dwell in the islands and to live in quiet, free from tyranny and never-ending wars." Instead of realizing this dream, Sertorius fought a second campaign in Mauritania, and then returning again to Spain defied the forces of the Republic, until he was treacherously assassinated by his own followers in B.C. 72. It is noticeable that Sertorius forms the subject of a tragedy of Corneille. The same motive, as expressed in a Spanish mediæval legend, has been adopted by Mr. William Morris as the basis of his *Earthly Paradise*. For an interesting account of the whole question of the ancient and mediæval belief in the existence of an Earthly Paradise in connection with the Atlantic Isles, the reader is referred to an article on this subject in *Blackwood's Magazine*, March 1884. The article is unsigned, but it was written, I believe, by Professor C. W. C. Oman.

l. 206. *That one Frenchman.* "Dominique de Gourgues, a French gentleman, who went in 1568 to Florida to avenge the massacre of the French by the Spaniards there." (Carter's note in orig. edition.)

l. 212. Gustavus I. (Vasa), *c.* 1496–1560. His family name was Ericson; he became king, and is reputed to be the founder of the modern kingdom of Sweden. In the war with Denmark he was carried off as a hostage by Christian I. to Denmark; thence he escaped to Lübeck in Germany, and eventually to Sweden in 1520. He urged his fellow-countrymen to revolt against the supremacy of Denmark; and in the course of this patriotic mission he avoided capture by working as a labourer on farms and in the mines of Dalecarlia.

l. 214. *The name of Wallace.* Apart from the fact that the name "Wallace" is common both as a Christian, surname, and place-name in Scotland, we have the following statement in

Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland in* 1803 (under date Aug. 21): "Passed two of Wallace's caves. There is scarcely a noted glen in Scotland that has not a cave for Wallace, or some other hero."

ll. 232–3. Conf. 'L'Allegro,' l. 137, and 'Paradise Lost,' III. l. 17; also Coleridge's 'Lines to a Gentleman,' etc., l. 46, at p. 375.

l. 271. The River Derwent, with Cockermouth —Wordsworth's birthplace—on its banks. See Map, p. lxviii.

l. 284. *Towers*, i. e. of Cockermouth Castle. "Our terrace walk" is at the foot of the garden of the house (still existing) in which Wordsworth's childhood was spent. In 'The Sparrow's Nest,' and poems v, vi, and vii of *Sonnets composed or suggested during a Tour in Scotland in the Summer of* 1833, further allusions are made to the scenery and associations of Cockermouth.

l. 305. *Beloved Vale*, i. e. Esthwaite, in which was Hawkshead. See Map.

l. 308. *Ten birthdays*. He was sent to Hawkshead Grammar School in 1778. See *Introd.* p. ix.

l. 309. *Had snapped The last autumnal crocus*. "About mid-October," says Prof. Knight, "the autumn crocus in the garden 'snaps' in that district."

l. 312. *Open heights*. Probably the hills "that lead up and on to the moor between Hawkshead and Coniston." (Knight.)

l. 327. *Cultured vale*, i. e. "The little oat-growing valley of Yewdale." (Knight.)

l. 336. *Naked crag*. Probably "the Holme Fells above Yewdale, to the north of Coniston . . . where a crag, now named the Raven's Crag, divides Tilberthwaite from Yewdale." (Knight.)

l. 360. *Cave*. "Cove" is suggested by Dr. Cradock.

l. 379. *A huge peak*. "The 'craggy steep' is probably the ridge of Tronkeld . . . while the 'huge peak' may be either the summit of Weatherham, or the Pike o' Blisco. Mr. Rawnsley . . . [thinks] Rydal Head would rise up 'bleak and huge,' if Wordsworth rowed from the west bank of Esthwaite Water; and Pike o' Stickle, if he rowed from the east bank." (Knight.)

l. 402. *Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!* ll. 402–464

were first published in Coleridge's paper, *The Friend*, December 28, 1809, as 'Growth of Genius from the Influences of Natural Objects on the Imagination in Boyhood and Early Youth.' They appear in the editions of Wordworth's collected poems from 1815 downwards. "These lines have already been published in the Author's Poetical Works, vol. i. p. 172, Ed. 1849—p. 62 of the Edition in One Volume." (Carter's note.)

l. 501. Anne Tyson's cottage, where Wordsworth boarded during his school-days, still exists at Hawkshead. It is a two-storied cottage paved with Coniston slate, and "externally unaltered," according to Prof. Knight. See Book IV. l. 27, and II. l. 343. Also *Introd.* p. ix.

l. 545. *Bothnic Main.* "The noise of the breaking up of the ice after a severe winter in these Lakes . . . is exactly as here described." So Coleridge (*Friend*, vol. ii. p. 223). "The thunders and howlings of the breaking ice." (Knight.)

ll. 546–568. Prof. Knight prints (vol. iii. p. 150) a variant MS. of this passage, found in a copy of Wordsworth's poems in the possession of the Poet's son. It is of finer poetic quality than the corresponding lines in the text.

BOOK II

l. 34. *In the square Of our small market village.* The scene can be recognized now at Hawkshead in spite of the "smart Assembly-room."

l. 59. The island "musical with birds" was "House Holme," or "Thompson's Holme"; the "Sister Isle," the "Lily of the Valley" island (which still deserves its name); and the "third small island," "Lady Holme." From the latter, however, the "ruins of a shrine" have disappeared. (Knight.)

l. 102. *Some famed temple.* Probably the Druidic circle at Conishead Priory, or the Cartmell Sands. (Knight.)

l. 103. *The antique walls Of that large abbey.* Furness Abbey (founded by King Stephen in 1127). The "Vale of Nightshade" is Bekansghyll.

l. 138. *The level sand.* "Doubtless the Cartmell Sands beyond Ulverston, at the estuary of the Leven." (Knight.)

l. 141. *A tavern stood.* The White Lion Inn, Bowness.

l. 159. *With gleams of water*, i. e. Esthwaite Water, seen through and over the trees from the inn and its "neighbouring cottages."

l. 169. *The Minstrel of the Troop.* "Robert Greenwood, afterwards Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge." (Knight.)

l. 180. *Not as I since have loved him.* Conf. 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, etc. 13 July, 1798.'

> "For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity,
> Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
> A lover of the meadows and the woods,
> And mountains; and of all that we behold
> From this green earth; of all the mighty world
> Of eye and ear, both what they half create,
> And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
> In nature and the language of the sense,
> The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being."

What M. Legouis writes of Wordsworth's attitude towards the senses forms an excellent commentary on the two passages. "Seuls, les sens sont de grands métaphysiciens et peuvent saisir en de certains moments la vie centrale du monde, l'essentielle vérité. La plus haute connaissance que l'homme puisse acquérir sur lui-même et sur les choses, il l'atteindra en se plaçant en pleine nature, sans rien faire que sentir." *La Jeunesse de William Wordsworth*, p. 464. See also *Introd.* p. xlviii.

l. 198. *Thou one dear Vale.* Esthwaite.

l. 211. *From yon fountain.* It seems probable that Wordsworth was thinking of the well known as "Betty's well," formerly enclosed in the garden of Church Hill House, Hawkshead, where it is said that he lodged during a part of his school-days with Betty Braithwaite. This well or spring ran underground into the main stream called the Town Beck. For a full discussion of the point see Knight, vol. iii. Appendix, Note II.

l. 234. *Blest the infant Babe.* "L'enfant, et pardessus tout l'enfant Wordsworth, a été la source inspiratrice de ses chantes les plus enthousiastes. Il a vécu les yeux habituellement tournés vers son passé." (Legouis.) And conf. the ode 'Intimations of Immortality,' etc.

l. 334. *The hours of school.* They were fixed by Archbishop Sandys, the founder of Hawkshead Grammar School, at 6 a.m. in summer, and 7 a.m. in winter. (Knight.)

l. 335. *Our little lake.* Esthwaite Water.

l. 337. *A Friend.* "The late Rev. John Fleming, of Rayrigg, Windermere." (Carter's note.) But Prof. Knight suggests the Rev. Charles Farish, author of *The Minstrels of Windermere*, and *Black Agnes*.

ll. 438–447. These lines reproduce, almost literally, the words of a letter by Coleridge, written to Wordsworth in the summer of 1799.

l. 459. Coleridge was educated at Christ's Hospital. The school has only recently been removed from London to West Horsham.

BOOK III

l. 1. Wordsworth had travelled from York to Cambridge; and he seems to have entered the town by the north-west road, passing the site of Girton.

l. 17. *At the 'Hoop.'* The inn exists, but its reputation has diminished.

l. 47. Wordsworth's rooms at St. John's College (over the kitchen as here described) are no longer in existence. They looked, as he tells us, into "the ante-chapel where the statue stood of Newton": *i. e.* the ante-chapel of Trinity College.

l. 140. *I was as sensitive as waters are To the sky's influence.* Conf. Mary Ann Cross ("George Eliot") to Frederic Harrison (Jan. 31, 1866): "To-day we have resolute rain, for the first time since we came down. You don't yet know what it is to be a sickly wretch, dependent on these skiey influences."

In "George Eliot's" case the sensitiveness of the poetic character to the moods of nature was increased by her (comparative) ill-health. This "sensitiveness" is the special characteristic of one of the two main types of poetic genius. "'Poetry,' says Aristotle, 'is an art which requires a man of genius or an enthusiast; for, of these two classes, the former readily receive impressions, the latter are easily carried out of themselves.' The poet, he has remarked, must realize what he portrays. This realization may be the result of actual experience. But as actual experience is necessarily limited, the poetic gifts are generally found in men who can realize what they portray without actually experiencing it. And so we get two natures which go to form poets — the sensitive (*εὐφυὴς, εὔπλαστος*), and the self-abandoning (*μανικὸς, ἐκστατικός*).

"It is difficult to apply the distinction to individual poets, and with the increasing complexity of modern thought, the poetic nature tends to include both elements. If, however, we identify with the sensitive nature, the poet who alternately startles and delights us by attaching deeper meanings and fresh analogies to the common facts of life, and the common processes of nature,

we cannot fail to recognize that it is on this side that poetry has especially developed in the present century." The Editor's *Principles of Criticism*, ch. ix. p. 191 (first ed.).

l. 194. *There's not a man That lives who hath not known his god-like hours.* The same doctrine of the prevalence of good in all created things is expressed in 'The Old Cumberland Beggar.'

> "'Tis nature's law
> That none, the meanest of created things,
> Of forms created the most vile and brute,
> The dullest or most noxious, should exist
> Divorced from good—a spirit and pulse of good,
> A life and soul, to every mode of being
> Inseparably linked."

And so Shakespeare :—

> "There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
> Would men observingly distil it out.
> . . . . . .
> Thus may we gather honey from the weed,
> And make a moral of the devil himself."
>
> *Henry V.*, Act iv. sc. 1.

The thought has been subsequently developed by Browning (whose "optimism" is in many respects the logical sequel of Wordsworth's reverence for nature) with an unrivalled power of dramatic presentation in *The Ring and the Book*. For the relationship of Wordsworth to Matthew Arnold and Browning in respect of the poetic treatment of nature the reader is referred to the Editor's *Principles of Criticism* ('The Interpretative Power of Poetry,' ch. ix. pp. 191–197, first ed.).

l. 280. *I laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade.* Two and a half miles south of Cambridge, "There are still some remains of the mill here celebrated by Chaucer in his Reve's Tale," says Lewes' *Topographical Dict. of England*. (Knight.) The historical evidence upon which Chaucer is supposed to have been connected with the University of Cambridge is very slight.

On the other hand, Spenser, Milton, Wordsworth, Byron, and Tennyson make a stronger group than any that Oxford can show. Spenser and Milton were respectively at Pembroke Hall and Christ's College.

l. 291. *An awful soul.* Sublimity is the characteristic excellence of Milton's poetry. "Milton's chief Talent, and indeed his distinguishing excellence, lies in the Sublimity of his Thoughts. There are others of the Moderns who rival him in every other Part of Poetry; but in the greatness of his Sentiments he triumphs over all the Poets, both ancient and modern, Homer only excepted. It is impossible for the Imagination of Man to distend itself with greater Ideas, than those which he has laid together in his First, Second, and Sixth Books." (Addison.) And see *Introd.* p. lx.

l. 313. *Call back, O Friend.* Coleridge was elected a sizar at Jesus College, Cambridge, Feb. 5, 1791, just a month after Wordsworth had taken his degree. He came into residence in the October following. He became a foundation scholar on June 5, 1793; but see note on Book VI. l. 281.

l. 480. *An obolus, a penny give To a poor scholar!* There is a double allusion—(1) to the mediæval story of Belisarius, and (2) to the poor scholar, who begged his way from University to University, in the Middle Ages. Belisarius (Beli-tzar, Sclavonic for "White Prince") was the one great general produced by the Byzantine Empire, and a notable instance of loyalty to the person of a sovereign—in this case Justinian I. He died in disgrace, in spite of his services in the campaigns against the Vandals in Africa and the Ostro-Goths in Italy, on March 13, A.D. 565. The story in question—that his eyes were put out, and he himself begged in the streets of Constantinople, crying *Date obolum Belisario*—has received a wide currency through Marmontel and other writers. The second allusion is illustrated by the great names of Bucer, Erasmus, and Melancthon, the leaders of the Reformation. Of these Martin Bucer (1491–1551), originally Martin Kuhorn of Schelestadt, near Strasburg, accepted Cranmer's invitation to visit England, and was subsequently

appointed to teach theology at Cambridge. He died and was buried there: his remains were disentombed by Mary and restored by Elizabeth. Erasmus (Desiderius—"the beloved," *c.* 1466–1536) came to England in 1497 with Lord Mountjoy, one of the pupils whom he took to earn a livelihood. He is said to have resided three years at Oxford; and he visited Paris, Padua, and Basel. While at Padua he was tutor to Alexander Stewart, a natural son of James IV. of Scotland. In London he was the friend of Sir Thomas More, the famous and ill-fated Chancellor of Henry VIII. Philip Melancthon, or George Schwartzerd (his name, *i. e.* "black-earth," was rendered into Greek at the suggestion of his influential kinsman, Reuchlin, 1497–1560), was appointed Professor of Greek in the University of Wittenberg in 1518 by the (Protestant) Elector of Saxony. His remains were buried by the body of Martin Luther, his friend and associate in the Reformation movement. In this connection it is worth noticing that the political value of the interchange of students between Universities in different parts of the British Empire has lately attracted the attention of educational authorities.

l. 517. *Yet was this deep vacation not given up To utter waste.* It must be remembered that this account of Cambridge as an element in his life was composed when Wordsworth was suffering most keenly from the ungenerous reception accorded to his first poetic efforts by the leaders of literary thought in England; and when, too, the memory of his failure to earn a livelihood by his pen in London was still fresh. The latter circumstance he might well take as evidence of the failure of his University career from a practical point of view. An admirable light is thrown on this aspect of the question by a passage written by Dorothy Wordsworth, under date June 26, 1791. "William," she writes, "lost the chance, indeed the certainty of a fellowship, by not combating his inclinations. He gave way to his natural dislike to studies so dry as many parts of the Mathematics, consequently could not succeed in Cambridge. He reads Italian, Spanish, French, Greek, Latin, and English; but never opens a

mathematical book. . . ." His own estimate of the value of the University to him is fairly represented by the words which he writes here. It was a "deep vacation not given up to utter waste." His mental development on the lines of creative literature would have been stunted by close study in a branch of human knowledge so rigid in its processes of thought as mathematics. On the other hand, he benefited indirectly by the enforced leisure. He found in the life of Cambridge an epitome of the world on its social side—an epitome all the more instructive because of the simplicity of the terms in which its lessons were expressed. And in l. 587 we have this aspect formally recognized :—

> "'Tis enough to note
> That here in dwarf proportions were expressed
> The limbs of the great world."

See also *Introd.* p. xi.

BOOK IV

l. 3. *A bare ridge clomb, upon whose top ;* i. e. in travelling by road from Kendal to Windermere. The "Summer Vacation," which forms the subject of Book IV., was that passed at Hawkshead in 1788. It was Wordsworth's first Long Vacation while he was at Cambridge.

l. 13. *For the old Ferryman ;* i. e. the ferry across Windermere about a mile south of Bowness.

l. 18. *Up the familiar hill ;* i. e. to Far Sawrey.

l. 19. *That sweet Valley.* "Hawkshead." (Carter's note.) Or Esthwaite.

l. 21. *The snow-white church.* Hawkshead Church (a Norman church built in 1160) was white-washed when Wordsworth knew it. It has since been restored. (Knight.)

l. 28. *From my old Dame.* Anne Tyson, who died in 1796, aged 83.

l. 50. *That unruly child of mountain birth, The famous brook.*

This brook is differently identified by Dr. Cradock and Mr. Rawnsley. See note on Book II. l. 211.

l. 78. *And, dear Friend.* Prof. Knight says that "and" should be changed to "nor." This, however, is not necessary if we take "And, dear Friend, . . . may I leave untold . . ." as a question expecting the answer "no," and, therefore, as a logical affirmative, shorn of the mark of interrogation.

l. 89. *A tall ash.* "The ash tree is gone, but there is no doubt as to the place where it grew." (Knight.)

l. 150. *Gently did my soul Put off her veil . . . Naked, as in the presence of her God.* For this passage—in particular ll. 160–171—see the quotation from M. Legouis given in the note on Book II. l. 180, and the *Introd.* p. xlviii and p. l. ("Wordsworth and Sensation," and "His use of Ecstasy.")

l. 191. *A freshness also found I at this time.* Here the value of his Cambridge experiences began to show. He looks at the old familiar scenes and persons from a new point of view.

l. 381. Wordsworth was returning from Windermere — Winander, he calls it in l. 375—to Hawkshead. He has past Far Sawrey, and is ascending again to Near Sawrey, crossing the valley between the two villages with the brook, Sawrey Beck, running in its midst. The road, rising in front of him, shows a watery surface under the pale light of the moon. Here, on the high ground, above Esthwaite Water (see Map, p. lxviii) he falls in with the old soldier resting against a milestone (l. 399). With this incident, which is typical of Wordsworth, we may compare Sir Walter Scott's habit of always entering into conversation with any person whom chance brought him as a possible companion—a habit which has materially contributed to the charm of the dialogue in the Waverley Novels.

BOOK V

Introductory Note.—In this Book of 'The Prelude' Wordsworth writes of "books" as an element in the development of his own

mind, and more generally as a factor in education. In doing so he refers incidentally to two questions connected with the theory and practice of education which are of immediate interest. He asserts the opinion, based upon his own experience, that a rigid adherence to certain definite subjects of study—what we should call now a "practical," as against a "liberal" education—has the effect of cramping, or dwarfing, the mind of the young. He rejoices that he was reared,

> "Safe from an evil which these days have laid
> Upon the children of the land, a pest
> That might have dried me up, body and soul." (ll. 227–9.)

He urges that the young mind should be left free to read the books for which it has a natural affinity. And from this question of freedom in selecting the field of study in books, he goes on to utter an emphatic protest against the attempt to make children assume the demeanour and habits of thought proper to maturity. He expresses his thankfulness that he was bred up among a race of children that were natural, not artificial.

> "A race of real children; not too wise,
> Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,
> And bandied up and down by love and hate." (l. 412, etc.)

The whole drift of his argument in these matters sets in favour of an education which should be a training of the faculties, not a mere acquisition of certain specific branches of knowledge.

Literature, as an educative power and a source of inspiration towards noble ideals, he puts second only to Nature and Religion. Books are

> "Powers
> For ever to be hallowed; only less,
> For what we are and what we may become,
> Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God,
> Or His pure Word by miracle revealed." (ll. 218–22.)

More than this, in two passages of remarkable insight, he insists upon the value of the idealistic motive in literature—the presentation of the "poetic justice" which pervades all creative literature with the exception of the tragedy (that is the tragic drama, or a work of fiction which is intentionally tragic in its motive). In ll. 492-534 he points out the value of romance in encouraging the mind to free itself from the limitations of the material world and the exigences of the present. And in ll. 547–585 he connects the innate love of poetry with that instinctive love of the ideal which is the ultimate source of all human progress :—

> "that most noble attribute of man,
> Though yet untutored and inordinate,
> That wish for something loftier, more adorned,
> Than is the common aspect, daily garb,
> Of human life."

As an estimate of the part played by literature as an element in the conscious life of man, the following passage from the Editor's *Judgment in Literature* may be of interest.

"Literature, in the widest sense, is the record of the impressions made by external realities of every kind upon great men, and of the reflexions which these men have made upon them. The subject-matter of literature covers the whole range of human life and activity, as well as every known manifestation of physical nature. For not only are actual events and the doings and sayings of actual persons reproduced in it, but the rules deduced from the observation of the conditions of man's life are included in its records. Similarly it presents to us not merely what individual men found to interest them in particular countries in a particular epoch, but also the general laws which have been gradually formulated by long-continued observation of the processes of nature. And so literature plays a very important part in the life of man. It is the greatest of the secondary sources of sensation, and it makes an immense contribution to the sum total of facts—the joint result of the experience of the

individual and of the race—which gives to each one of us this subjective outlook upon the world at large.

"In order to realize to how large an extent the subjective existence of man is made up of the material of books, we will pause a moment to consider what literature does for us. Through literature we converse with the great dead, with Plato, with Buddha, with Montaigne, with Addison; we walk the streets of Babylon, of Athens, of Rome, of Alexandria; we see great monuments, reared ages ago, and long since crumbled to the dust; we recreate the life of distant epochs, and thus by comparison gauge the progress achieved by the men of to-day. Through literature we learn wisdom from Aristotle, geometry from Euclid, law from Justinian, morality from Christ and St. Paul. Literature makes the physical features, the inhabitants, the climate, the produce of the antipodes as familiar as those of the neighbouring county. More than this, the masters of creative literature have made regions of their own which they have peopled with the children of their genius. Homer has given us an Ægean of sun-lit islands and purple seas, Dante a dark and mysterious Inferno, Milton a garden of Eden, Shakespeare an Elizabethan England, with landscapes more brightly hued, and men and women more finely real, than the landscapes or the people of the England of Elizabeth; Molière a France more natural and more vivid than the France of the Grand Monarque. And so it is that Odysseus, Antigone, Beatrice, Hamlet, Tartuffe, and the rest, these spiritual offspring of great souls, live side by side with Moses, Alexander, Cæsar, Joan of Arc, and Henry VIII.: for literature has made the personalities of each almost as familiar to us as those of our dearest or most intimate friends." (Chap. ii. p. 13.)

l. 45. *O! why hath not the Mind Some element to stamp her image on.* If the view put forward in the passage quoted above be correct, the creations of the literary artist may claim to have an equal permanence with the personages of history. And it must be remembered that historical personages owe a large part of their immortality to the services of literature. The great

example of the destruction of the "shrines so frail" in which the spirit of Mind is embodied, is the burning of the library at Alexandria—the greatest blow ever dealt to literature—in B.C. 47.

l. 60. *The famous history of the errant knight.* Wordsworth has told us that he read *Don Quixote* when he was at school. "I read," he says, "all Fielding's works, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and the *Tale of a Tub*; the two latter being much to my taste." We know also that he studied Spanish when he was at Blois in 1792 with General Beaupuy.

l. 181. *Brother of my soul.* The fact that 'The Prelude' was first of all an appeal to the sympathy of Coleridge, no doubt influenced Wordsworth in his determination not to publish the work during his lifetime. Passages in which the personal note is most evident might have seemed incongruous or forced *then*; but, to us, who read them *now*, they give a sense of reality to this record of his inner life.

l. 256. *Early died My honoured Mother.* She died when Wordsworth was eight years old, *i. e.* in 1778, at her parents' house at Penrith.

ll. 365–398. "See the Author's Poetical Works, ii. 93—p. 141 of the Edition in One Volume." (Carter's note.) The poem, 'There was a boy,' was composed in 1798 or 1799, and was included in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. It is curious that in his collected poems he groups it under "Poems of the Imagination."

l. 394. It is the Hawkshead Grammar School that he here calls "the village school."

l. 398. Prof. Knight says that both the boy and grave are unknown.

l. 401. *The thronèd Lady.* See note on Book IV. l. 21.

l. 412. His ideal woman has the same quality of naturalness (in 'She was a Phantom of Delight').

l. 511. The thought is developed in the famous ode, 'Intimations of Immortality,' etc. See *Introd.* p. xxxvi.

l. 563. *With a dear friend.* "This friend of his boyhood, with whom Wordsworth spent these 'delightful hours,' is as

unknown as is the immortal boy of Windermere, . . . and the Lucy of the Goslar poems." (Knight.)

l. 571. *Though full oft the objects of our love Were false.* Speaking of his early verses—"a long poem running upon my own adventures, and the scenery of the country in which I was brought up"—he says, "they were but a tame imitation of Pope's versification, and a little in his style." See *Introd.* p. xl, for his subsequent revolt from the eighteenth-century conception of poetry and poetic diction.

BOOK VI

l. 6. *Granta's cloisters;* i. e. Cambridge. In Roman times there was a small settlement named Camboritum on the banks of the Cam, or Granta. The Anglo-Saxon name was Grantabridge; and a village near Cambridge still preserves the Anglo-Saxon name of the river in the hybrid "Grantchester."

l. 11. *Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern.* The line affords an instance of the successful rendering of an effect of colour in woods. Even in dull weather the light orange of the withering bracken gives an artificial light to the woodlands or moors; as though the sun's rays were playing upon the countryside.

l. 22. *Two winters may be passed*, i. e. 1789 and 1790. See *Introd.* p. xi.

l. 48. *Four years and thirty, told this very week.* As Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770, this passage definitely marks the composition of Book VI. as proceeding in April 1804. See note to *Advertisement*, p. 379.

l. 78. *An ash which Winter for himself Decked as in pride.* Prof. Knight says that no trace of this ash remains now. But Dorothy Wordsworth writes, under date Aug. 14, (probably) 1808, in describing a visit to Cambridge: "I sought out a favourite ash tree which my brother speaks of in his poem on his own life—a tree covered with ivy."

l. 95. See note on Book III. l. 517.

l. 110. See *Introd.* p. lxv, for Wordsworth's Essay on Poetic Diction.

l. 173. *Moods melancholy.* See Book III. l. 140 and note.

l. 180. *The Bard who sang;* i. e. Thomson in the *Castle of Indolence*, Canto I. stanza xv. l. 2.

l. 193. Dovedale, in Derbyshire, is justly celebrated for its beauty. The Yorkshire dales—Wharfdale, Ribblesdale, Netherdale, and Wensleydale, etc., are on the east side of the "divide" between Yorkshire and the Lake District. Bolton Abbey—the scene of 'The White Doe of Rylstone'—is in Wharfdale. The village green of Wensley, which gives its name to Wensleydale, provided Frith with the scene of his 'Merry-making in the Olden Time.'

l. 199. *That sole sister.* Dorothy Wordsworth. See *Introd.* p. xviii. The "summer" (l. 190) was that of 1789. The "separation desolate" seems to refer to the interval between the end of 1790 and the reunion of the brother and sister at Halifax in 1794.

l. 205. *That monastic castle;* i. e. Brougham Castle, standing at the junction of the rivers Lowther and Eamont, about a mile and a half east of Penrith.

l. 208. *Sidney;* i. e. Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586), author of the *Arcadia*, and one of the great Elizabethans.

l. 224. *Another maid;* i. e. Mary Hutchinson, afterwards his wife.

l. 233. *The Border Beacon;* i. e. a little north-east of Penrith.

l. 240. *Far art thou wandered.* Coleridge was at Malta. See *Introd.* p. xxiv.

l. 266. *A liveried schoolboy.* The Christ's Hospital boys continued to wear the mediæval dress—long blue coat, knee breeches and stockings. Hence the *soubriquet* "Blue-coat" school. See Book II., l. 459, and note.

l. 272. *Thy native stream;* i. e. the Otter, in South Devon. Coleridge was born at Ottery St. Mary, of which place his father, the Rev. John Coleridge, was Vicar.

l. 278. Coleridge was at Jesus College, Cambridge. See note on Book III. l. 313.

l. 281. *What a stormy course Then followed.* Coleridge left Cambridge at the end of 1793 in a fit of despair, and enlisted (Dec. 4, 1793) in the 15th Dragoons, giving the name of "Silas Tomkyn Comberback." He was bought out by his brothers, April 10, 1794. He returned to Cambridge, April 12, but he left the University without a degree at the end of 1794. In the following year (1795) he was lecturing at Bristol in favour of the Republican movement.

l. 323. *A youthful friend;* i. e. Robert Jones. See *Introd.* p. xii.

l. 342. *Lightly equipped.* See *Introd.* p. xiii.

l. 346. *That great Federal day.* Wordsworth landed at Calais on July 13, 1790. On the next day—the anniversary of the destruction of the Bastille—Louis XVI. swore to observe the new constitution adopted by the States General, under which France was to become a limited monarchy.

l. 349. *Southward;* i. e. to Châlon-sur-Saône (July 29).

l. 377. *Upon the bosom of the gentle Saone.* Wordsworth's "Itinerary" shows that the travellers left Châlon by boat for Lyons, which they reached on July 30.

l. 379. *Swift Rhone.* They left Lyons on July 31, and sailed down the Rhone to Condrieu, thence making their way to the Chartreuse.

l. 389. *Chiefly delegates returning.* In these companions "it is easy to recognize the delegates sent from Marseilles to the Federation." (Legouis.)

l. 426. *Commissioned to expel.* M. Legouis has pointed out that Wordsworth is mistaken in supposing that the monks of the Chartreuse were expelled at this time. It was, he says, only a domiciliary visit, and the convent was not occupied by a military force until 1792. La Grande Chartreuse, or Saint Pierre de Chartreuse, lies fourteen miles north of Grenoble, at an altitude of 4268 feet above sea level. Wordsworth and his companions stayed two days at the Chartreuse. The monks of the

Chartreuse have, however, now been expelled in consequence of the recent legislation affecting the position of the Religious Orders in France.

l. 440. *The sister streams of Life and Death.* The *Guiers Mort* and the *Guiers Vif.* The early poem, 'Descriptive Sketches,' published in 1793, which deals with the subject of this vacation tour, is furnished with notes supplied by Wordsworth himself. "St. Bruno's pines" are here "St. Bruno's forest"; and to the line, "The mystic streams of Life and Death," is appended the note: "Names of rivers at the Chartreuse." St. Bruno (born *c.* 1030 at Cologne) was the founder of the Carthusian Order. He retired to the wild and inaccessible heights of Chartreuse in 1084; but the first convent on the present site dates from 1137.

l. 481. *Vallombre's groves.* "Name of one of the valleys of the Chartreuse." (Wordsworth's note.)

l. 485. *As if Hands of angelic powers.* "By angels planted on the aerial rock," with the note: "Alluding to crosses seen on the tops of the spiry rocks of Chartreuse, which have every appearance of being inaccesible." *Ibid.*

l. 490. Wordsworth's "Itinerary of the Tour" shows that, leaving Calais on July 13, he and his companion traversed France, entered Switzerland, crossed the Alps to the Italian lakes, returned to Switzerland, and made their way down the Rhine by boat to Cologne on Sept. 28, travelling from that town through Belgium to Calais.

l. 525. They crossed from Martigny to Chamouni on Aug. 11. The "bare ridge," says Prof. Knight, is the Col de Balme.

l. 587. *With the current of that stream.* In 'Descriptive Sketches' "Tusa's stream," with the note: "the river along whose banks you descend in crossing the Alps by the Simplon Pass."

l. 623. *The brook and road.* "See Poetical Works, ii. 99—p. 143 of the Edition in One Volume." (Carter's note.)

l. 647. *A dreary mansion.* The old hospice in the Simplon, about twenty-two miles from Duomo d'Ossola. (Knight.)

l. 657. *Locarno's Lake*; i. e. the Lago Maggiore.

l. 673. *I strove To chant your praise*; i. e. in 'Descriptive Sketches':

> "More pleased, my foot the hidden margin roves
> Of Como, bosomed deep in chestnut groves . . ."

l. 702. *Gravedona.* At the head of Como.

l. 766. *We crossed the Brabant armies*; i. e. in going through Belgium from Cologne to Calais.

BOOK VII

l. 1. *Six changeful years.* The reference is to the composition of the "preamble" at Goslar, Feb. 10. 1799. See *Introd.* p. xx; and note to *Advertisement*, p. 379, for the dates referred to in ll. 1–42.

l. 3. *The City's walls.* "The City of Goslar, in Lower Saxony." (Carter's note.)

l. 13. Coleridge had heard part of 'The Prelude,' and expressed his approbation of it, before he went to Malta in April 1804.

l. 44. *My favourite grove.* "Doubtless John's Grove, below White Moss Common," Grasmere. (Knight.)

l. 52. *Returned from that excursion.* In the summer of 1790, with Jones. "See p. 148" (Carter's note), *i. e.* Book VI. l. 322.

l. 52. *I bade farewell.* In January 1791, when he took his B.A. degree.

l. 65. *Three years.* He visited London in 1788. He refers again to this "first impression" in Book VIII. l. 540.

l. 76. *And all my young affections out of doors.* A line of admirable poetic quality.

l. 81. *Alcairo.* Cairo is, of course, a corruption of Masr-el-Kâhira—*Masr* the Victorious. *Masr*, or *Misr*, the Hebrew *Mazor*, *Misraim* (possibly connected with Memphis, the capital of Ancient Egypt), indicates both the capital and the country.

The Mohammedan capital of Egypt—the present Cairo—was founded in A.D. 972.

Persepolis. The ruins of Persepolis (original form probably *περσόπολις, i. e.* the city of the Persians) lie forty miles north-east of Shiraz. They consist of the remains of vast buildings constructed of the dark grey marble quarried in the adjacent mountains. The city was built under Darius I., and enlarged by Xerxes, and subsequent kings. It was comparatively unknown to the Greek world until it was taken and partly destroyed by Alexander the Great.

l. 114. *Heard the bells speak out.*

"Turn again, Whittington,
Lord Mayor of London."

l. 132. *Bedlam ;* a corruption of "Bethlehem." Originally the hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, incorporated a royal foundation by Henry VIII., in 1547. The building with "those carved maniacs at the gates," which Wordsworth saw, was the old Bethlehem hospital at Moorfields, erected in 1676, to which the inmates of the original asylum were then removed. This building was an imitation of the Tuileries at Paris. The hospital in St. George's Fields was begun on April 12, 1814, and opened in 1815. It was enlarged in 1856, from the designs of Sydney Smirke.

l. 166. *Boyle,* i. e. Robert, son of the great Earl of Cork (1627–1691). He founded the Royal Society of London in 1660.

l. 254. *The Falls of Tivoli.* Tivoli (the ancient Tibur—a Latin town long anterior to Rome), on the spur of Monte Ripoli, where the Anio river falls eighty feet into the valley below, is twenty (Roman) miles north-east of Rome. It is now (as in ancient days) a health resort for the Romans, and a place of great natural beauty. Among the ruins identified is that of the temple of the Sibyl.

l. 267. *Half-rural Sadler's Wells.* Sadler built an orchestra to entertain the visitors, who came to drink the water of the

wells at Clerkenwell, in 1683. Hence the name. The theatre, which grew out of Sadler's orchestra, was opened in 1765. It was re-opened by Mrs. Bateman as "The New Sadler's Wells Theatre," Oct. 9, 1879.

l. 283. From Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, ll. 87–9.

l. 288. Conf. *Hamlet*, I. v. l. 100.

l. 297. *The Maid of Buttermere*. Mary, daughter of the inn-keeper of the Fish Inn, at Buttermere in Cumberland. Hatfield, calling himself the Hon. Col. Hope, a brother of Lord Hopetoun, persuaded her to marry him. It subsequently transpired, when he was on his trial at Carlisle for forgery, that he was already possessed of a wife and family. He was hung at Carlisle. The story formed the subject of a melodrama, which was produced at all the London suburban theatres; and a novel by Henry Colburn, written in 1843, was founded upon it. (Knight.)

l. 379. *Mary!* i. e. the "Maid of Buttermere."

l. 382. *Four rapid years . . . Since, travelling southward;* i. e. to Cambridge in Oct. 1787.

l. 406. *Siddons: née* Kemble, Sarah (1755–1831).

l. 428. Conf. *Macbeth*, II. i. l. 58.

ll. 470 485. This passage is interesting as showing the effect of the drama upon Wordsworth. "Realism" does not appeal to him—it does not pass beyond "the suburbs of the mind." It is only when the ideal element is present—the portrayal of spiritual principles—that his imagination is stirred.

l. 498. Conf. *Henry V.*, IV. iii. l. 53.

l. 512. *Genius of Burke:* Edmund, born 1729–30, died 1799.

l. 564. *The Death of Abel. Todt Abels*, written by Solomon Gessner, artist and poet, born at Zurich in 1730; died 1787. The work was translated into English, and was popular in England. *The Bard whose genius;* i. e. Edward Young (1684–1765), author of *Night Thoughts; on Life, Death and Immortality*, published 1742–46.

l. 568. *Morven:* on the Sound of Mull, in Argyllshire.

l. 676. *The Fair, Holden where martyrs suffered;* i. e. under Mary, 1553–58. St. Bartholomew's Fair was held under a

charter of Henry I., granted in 1153; and continued to be held down to 1853. It was "proclaimed" for the last time in 1855. West Smithfield—once a favourite place of resort beyond the walls of London—is mentioned as early as 1150 as the site of a cattle market. Wallace, the patriot, was executed here in 1305.

ll. 722–730. "The original of some of these lines is found in a MS. book of Dorothy Wordsworth." (Dowden.)

l. 735. *Sees the parts As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.* The power of synthesis, which Wordsworth here (ll. 740–742) attributes to the influence of Nature, is rather due to the idealizing faculty of the artist-mind. In his own case, no doubt, this faculty was developed by his early familiarity with the forms and processes of physical nature as seen on an imposing scale in his native Lakeland. But the symbolism of Nature, and, therefore, its spiritual beauty, is due to the action of the human mind. "Art is the 'free reproduction of beauty,' and the faculty to which it is to be referred is 'genius.' Genius is a union of creative power with 'taste,' and this latter is itself a complex of imagination, feeling, and reason. Genius does not create in the sense of being the 'rival of God'; nor does it merely 'imitate.' It finds its materials in Nature, but it reproduces them in a different form. This difference of form is due to the fact that the artist does not directly reproduce the real, but an 'idea' of the real which he has himself created by a process of selection, and which has no exact counterpart in any 'natural object.' The 'end' of Art, therefore, is 'the expression of moral beauty by the assistance of physical beauty.'" (The Editor's *Principles of Criticism*, chap. on Victor Cousin.)

BOOK VIII

l. 11. *A rustic fair.* Dorothy Wordsworth alludes to these fairs in her Grasmere Journal, Sept. 2, 1800. (Knight.)

ll. 48–52. "These lines are from a description—'Malvern

Hills'—by one of Mr. Wordsworth's oldest friends, Mr. Joseph Cottle." (Carter's note.) Cottle was the publisher of the *Lyrical Ballads*. See *Introd.* p. xx.

l. 73. *Those domains of rural peace*, etc. If we take the "first" literally, the "tract more exquisitely fair" would be Cockermouth and the valley of the Derwent; but he may be thinking of the Lake District as a whole.

l. 76. *That famed paradise.* The word paradise (παράδεισος) means park; and Wordsworth is probably thinking of the great park outside Babylon, on the banks of the Euphrates, which appealed so strongly to the Greek mind. Within its boundaries was the palace named the "admiration of mankind" by Nebuchadnezzar, and the Hanging Gardens—called a "Hanging Paradise" in Josephus. This latter was a garden formed by successive rows of arches (of which the highest rose seventy-five feet above the ground), and extending over an area four hundred (Greek) feet square.

l. 77. *Or Gehol's matchless gardens.* Gehol, or Jehol (Chengte-fu), is a town in Mongolia, 140 miles north-east of Pekin, near which is the summer palace of the emperors of China. Its woods and gardens, embellished with temples, pavilions and grottoes, are enclosed by a wall six miles long. The point of the comparison is, of course, that these places are artificial in their beauty, whereas the beauty of the English Lakeland is natural.

l. 175. *Of delicate Galesus.* The Galæsus, a river near Tarentum, in Calabria; mentioned in the *Georgics* of Virgil, and the *Odes* of Horace.

l. 180. *Of rich Clitumnus.* A small but beautiful stream in Umbria. Its source, four miles from Trebia, sprang from a hill clothed with cypresses, on which stood a temple to Clitumnus. Its waters were so pure, and the pastures which it fertilized were so rich, that its valley nurtured a breed of pure white cattle (Virgil, *Georg.* ii. 146). The scenery of the source is described by the younger Pliny (*Epistles*, viii. 8).

l. 182. *Cool Lucretilis:* a hill (identified as part of the Monte

Gennaro, which is seen from Rome) in the Sabine country, close to the site of Horace's farm ; *i. e.* near Licenza. (Horace, *Odes*, i. 17.) The Roman poet calls it "the pleasant Lucretilis."

l. 211. *Goslar, once imperial.* Goslar was founded about 920, by Henry the Fowler. In the town is the *Kaiserworth* with the statues of the German Emperors, and the *Kaiserhaus*, founded by Henry III. in 1050. It was a frequent meeting-place of the German Diets, and residence of the emperors. In 1350 Goslar became a member of the Hanseatic League ; and it remained a free town down to 1802, when it fell under the rule of Prussia.

l. 215. *The Hercynian forest.* The ancient *Hercynia silva*, Ἑρκυνία ὕλη (first mentioned in Aristotle as Ἀρκύνια ὄρη), was at the time of Julius Cæsar an enormous tract of forest, covering almost all the mountains of Southern and Central Germany. Flügel connects the modern name of the mountains—Hartz or Harz—which still preserve the name of the Hercynian forest, with the German "harz," *i. e.* resin. The conifers with which the mountains are clothed are, of course, resinous.

l. 273. See note on Book VI. l. 485.

ll. 275–301. This account of the origin of Wordsworth's optimistic attitude towards man and human nature is noticeable. See *Introd.* p. xxxix.

l. 285. *Corin . . . Phyllis.* The conventional characters of the classical and Elizabethan pastorals.

l. 350. *Two and twenty summers ;* i. e. in 1792, when he was in France.

l. 371. See note on Book V, l. 571.

l. 382. Note the fine phrase, "the dignities of plain occurrence."

l. 412. *Oft beside the hearth.* "The context of the poem points to Hawkshead ; but the details of the description suggest the Grasmere cottage rather than Anne Tyson's." (Knight.)

l. 462. *Thurston Mere*, i. e. Coniston Lake. Thurston, the old name of Coniston, is connected with the worship of the god *Thor*. (Knight.)

l. 471. *Dear native Regions.* "See Poetical Works, i. 1." (Carter's note.) The original verses—"Dear native Regions, I foretell"—were written when Wordsworth was only sixteen years of age.

l. 565. *The Grotto of Antiparos.* Antiparos is a small island west of, and opposite to—hence the name—Paros, one of the larger islands in the Cyclades group. Paros was famous for its white marble, which was considered second only to that of Mt. Pentelicus, near Athens, as material for sculpture.

l. 567. *Yordas.* In Kingsdale—between Ingleton and a long ridge called Gragreth—four and a half miles from Ingleton, Yorkshire. "Yordas Cave (so called from a traditional giant, whose chamber and oven are pointed out in the limestone) is at the foot of the upper slopes of Gragreth. It is a grand limestone cavern, rich in stalactites." (Murray's *Hand-book to Yorkshire.*)

l. 664. "From Milton, 'Paradise Lost,' xi. 204." (Carter's note.)

l. 671. See note on Book VII. l. 735.

l. 683. See 'L'Allegro,' l. 118.

BOOK IX

l. 24. In February to May 1791, after taking his degree at Cambridge.

l. 34. Wordsworth's second visit to France began in Nov. 1791, and lasted until Dec. 1792.

l. 40. *A pleasant town*; i. e. Orléans.

l. 45. *From the field of Mars.* Wordsworth indicates the whole of Paris by mentioning four characteristic places—the Champ de Mars (west), the Faubourg Ste. Antoine (east), Monmartre (north), and the Panthéon (south). He has anglicized Monmartre (*mons martyrum*) to Mont Martyr, and given the Dome of Geneviève for the Panthéon.

l. 49. *The National Synod and the Jacobins.* The States General,

consisting of the representatives of the Clergy, Nobles, and Commons, or *Tiers État*, was opened at Notre Dame, on May 5, 1789, and met on the day following at Versailles. On June 17 the *Tiers Etat* assumed the title of "National Assembly," and on July 14 the body so called invested itself with the sovereign power. The Jacobin Club was instituted in October of the same year. It met in the hall of the Dominicans' Convent, originally the hospital of the pilgrims of St. James (Jacobus). This latter circumstance had given the members of the convent the name of the Jacobin Friars; and this name (Jacobin) was transferred to the members of the revolutionary club so called, which consisted of forty men of letters and other revolutionary leaders. The Jacobin Club was closed on Nov. 11, 1794.

l. 52. *In the Palace huge.* The Palais Royal was originally the *Palais Cardinal*, built by Lemercier for Cardinal Richelieu in 1620 36. It was subsequently occupied by Louis XIII., and the name was changed to Palais Royal. It was given by Louis XIV. to his brother Philippe, Duc d'Orléans. In 1793, after the execution of Philippe Égalité, it was confiscated to the nation. On the restoration of the monarchy Louis Philippe used it as a residence from 1814 to 1831. The "arcades" were then replaced by the Galerie d'Orléans. The building was injured during the Revolution of 1848, and again in 1871 by the Communists.

l. 67. *The dust Of the Bastille.* Destroyed July 14-15, 1789. The castle was originally built by Charles V. (in 1369–83) to defend Paris against the English invaders. It was subsequently used as a state prison, and as thus employed it became the symbol and embodiment of the monarchical power in its worst aspect.

l. 77. Charles Le Brun: court painter to Louis XIV. (1619-90).

ll. 132 and 139. *Save only one . . . One, reckoning by years, Was in the prime of manhood.* From Orléans Wordsworth passed on to Blois (about twenty miles west), and it was here, among the officers of the garrison, that he met Beaupuy. (See *Introd.* p. xiv.)

l. 176. *Carra, Gorsas.* Two of the journalist deputies sent to the National Convention. The latter—Gorsas—was the first journalist deputy to fall a victim to the fury of the "Committee of Public Safety," of which Robespierre was president. (See Carlyle's *French Revolution.*) In the first edition "Gorsas" was wrongly printed "Gorcas"—a mistake which is corrected in the notes added by Mr. Carter. This sole *erratum* (and its prompt correction) shows that the text of 'The Prelude,' as published, had been carefully revised; and affords a *primâ facie* ground for hesitating to accept any of the corrections of the text subsequently proposed. (See notes on Book IV. l. 78, and Book X. l. 306.)

l. 183. *The band of emigrants in arms.* The emigration of the French nobles began in Oct.–Dec. 1789. The *Emigrés* subsequently fought in the armies of the First Coalition against France (June 1792).

l. 290. Armand Michel de Bachelier, Chevalier de Beaupuy, was born at Mussidau, Perigord, on July 15, 1757. His mother was Mdlle. de Villars, through whom Beaupuy traced descent from Montaigne.

l. 411. *Did Dion hold with Plato.* In his poem on 'Dion,' Wordsworth has—

> "Not less the homage that was seen to wait
> On Dion's virtues, when the lunar beam
> Of Plato's genius, from its lofty sphere,
> Fell round him in the grove of Academe
> Softening their inbred dignity austere."

l. 412. *A Deliverer's glorious task.* Dion, the son of Hipparinus, was brother-in-law of Dionysius the Elder, tyrant of Syracuse. Regarding the conduct of his nephew, Dionysius the Younger, with strong disapprobation, he induced him to invite Plato again to Syracuse. Plato's good advice was, however, fruitless, and Dion, banished from Syracuse by Dionysius, retired to Athens. Plato then visited Syracuse a third time, and endeavoured to procure the recall of Dion. Dionysius not only

refused this, but subsequently confiscated Dion's property and forced his (Dion's) wife to take another husband. Fired by these wrongs, Dion determined to liberate Syracuse from the rule of Dionysius. He "sailed from Zacynthus" with two merchant ships, carrying less than a thousand mercenaries. Under Dion and his brother Megacles, as generals-in-chief, the Syracusans expelled Dionysius; but upon a conflict between the citizens and himself, Dion retired to Leontini. He was then recalled to Syracuse, and created "Autocrator," or Dictator; this office he held until he was assassinated in B.C. 353. As a matter of historical fact, Dion appears to have been as despotic a ruler as Dionysius. Eudemus, the Cyprian, and Timonides, the Leucadian, supported Dion in his enterprise.

l. 426. *He perished fighting, in supreme command.* At the defeat of the Republican forces at Laval and Château-Gonthier, on Oct. 26, 1793, Beaupuy was struck by a shot, and fell, crying: "Laissez-moi là, et portez à mes grenadiers ma chemise sanglante." His soldiers believed that he was dead, and fought with fury to avenge his blood. Wordsworth, as M. Legouis has pointed out, made the same mistake. He was present—holding the rank of a General of Brigade—at the victory of Savenay, Dec. 22, 1793, which closed the war of La Vendée; but he met his death three years later, in one of the actions fought on the banks of the Elz, on Oct. 19, 1796. See M. Legouis' *Le Général Michel Beaupuy*, and his *La Jeunesse de William Wordsworth*. The name is spelt "Beaupuis" by Wordsworth—a natural mistake, corrected, thanks to M. Legouis, for the first time in the "Oxford Wordsworth."

l. 453. The reference is to the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto. Canto I.

l. 455. *Erminia;* in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* of Tasso. Canto VI.

l. 483. *Romorentin, home of ancient kings;* a small town near Villefranche, on the Cher. The château, built by Francis I., is now used as a sub-prefecture.

l. 484. *The imperial edifice of Blois.* The castle—for many

years the residence of kings and princes—was rebuilt by Louis XII., who was born at Blois. Louis XII., Francis I., Henry III., Catharine and Mary de Medici, all lived here. In 1845 the castle (which had been used as a barracks) was in a ruinous condition; but since that date a part—especially the red-brick remains of Louis XII.'s château—has been carefully restored.

l. 485. *That rural castle . . . where a lady lodged.* The lady was Claude, daughter of Louis XII.

l. 493. *Far off at Chambord.* The Château de Chambord, twelve miles distant from Blois, was built by Francis I., on the site of an ancient hunting-lodge of the Counts of Blois. It is an interesting example of the change from the fortified castle of the Middle Ages to the Italian palace, which was mainly a residence. It served as a country palace for the kings of France, until Louis XIV. removed to Versailles—a residence conveniently near Paris. Louis XV. gave the Château de Chambord to Marshal Saxe; and it afterwards served as a retreat for Stanislas, King of Poland, and his daughter, Maria Leczinska, queen of Louis XV. It was purchased from the widow of Marshal Berthieu (to whom it had been given by Napoleon in 1809) for 1,542,000 francs, raised by public subscription, and presented on May 1, 1821, to Henri Charles Ferdinand, Duc de Bordeaux, postumous son of Charles Ferdinand d'Artois, Duc de Berri (assassinated, March 1820). He was afterwards known as the Comte de Chambord, and on July 2, 1874, he issued a manifesto which he signed "Henri V."

l. 549. *Repeat a tale.* "See 'Vaudracour and Julia,' Poetical Works, i. 244 –p. 81 of the Edition in One Volume." (Carter's note.)

ll. 555-8. These are the opening lines of the poem 'Vaudracour and Julia,' to which Wordsworth prefixes the note: "The following tale was written as an episode in a work from which its length may perhaps exclude it. The facts are true; no invention as to these has been exercised, as none was needed."

ll. 584 8. These are the concluding lines of 'Vaudracour and Julia.'

BOOK X

l. 9. *A farewell look.* Wordsworth left Blois for Paris in the autumn of 1792.

l. 12. *The king had fallen;* i. e. Louis XVI., dethroned Aug. 10, 1792.

l. 36. *The baffled League.* The first European coalition against Republican France, formed in June 1792.

l. 40. *The venerable name Of a Republic.* The Republic was decreed Sept. 20, and proclaimed Sept. 22, 1792.

l. 42 *Dire work Of massacre;* i. e. from Sept. 2 to Sept. 6, 1792. (The "September" massacres.)

l. 94. See note on Book IX. l. 52.

l. 111. *Louvet;* i. e. Jean Baptiste Louvet. For the scene, see Carlyle's *French Revolution*, vol. iii. Book II. chap. 5.

l. 199. *Harmodius known And his compeer Aristogiton;* murdered Hipparchus, brother of the tyrant Hippias, in B.C. 514, and freed Athens from the tyranny of the Peisistratidæ.

l. 223. For the circumstances under which Wordsworth left Paris, see *Introd.* p. xvi.

l. 247. Wordsworth was in London during the winter of 1792–93; staying, probably, with his brother Richard. He visited W. Calvert in the Isle of Wight, in the "latter part" of the summer of 1793.

l. 250. *That first memorable onset.* The Society for the Suppression of the Slave Trade was founded in 1787 by Clarkson, Wilberforce, and Dellwyn; but the Act for the abolition of the Slave Trade was not passed until 1807. Slavery, as an institution, was not abolished in the British Empire until 1833–38. The action of England has been gradually followed during the nineteenth century by all other civilized powers.

l. 306. *At a time In which worst losses easily might wean The best of names.* Mr. T. Hutchinson proposes "wear" instead of "wean." But the change seems unnecessary, as the passage can be rendered thus:—The declaration of war by France in Feb. 1793 was practically forced by the attitude of the British Government.

Those who were responsible for this policy, says Wordsworth, have "torn from the best youth of England" their "pride, their joy in England," and this, too, at a time when the political situation was otherwise so unsatisfactory that it ("worst losses") might easily *wean* (i. e. repulse from their mother country) the men who bore the proudest names (the "best of names"). Moreover there is a passage recording Wordsworth's feelings at this time, which seems to make it very difficult to adopt the correction "wear" for "wean," and thus to give the words the sense that "worst losses" might easily appear blessings in disguise. In this passage the "worst losses" here indicated are directly connected with the loss of the American Colonies. In the "advertisement" prefixed to the first edition of 'Guilt and Sorrow, or Incidents on Salisbury Plain'—a poem which was written within a year of Wordsworth's visit to the Isle of Wight, and his consequent view of the British Fleet—he writes: "In the latter part of the summer of 1793, having passed a month in the Isle of Wight, in view of the fleet which was then preparing for sea off Portsmouth at the commencement of the war, I left the place with melancholy forebodings. *The American War was still fresh in memory.* The struggle which was beginning . . . I was assured in my own mind would be of long continuance. . . . This conviction was pressed upon me by having been a witness, during a long residence in revolutionary France, of the spirit which prevailed in that country." There was a considerable party who thought (as Wordsworth did, until he was disillusioned by the conquests of Napoleon) that England, as the country of free government, ought to have supported the cause of the Republican party in France. There is a similar use of "wean" in *Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty*, Oct. 1803 :—

> "England! the time is come when thou shouldst wean
> Thy heart from its emasculating food;
> The truth should now be better understood."

This sonnet is otherwise interesting as showing the change which was being wrought in Wordsworth's political views. His

sympathy with Republican France has been weakened, and he decides that though England has done harm to the cause of liberty, France is a worse offender :—

> "England ! all nations in this charge agree :
> But worse, more ignorant in love and hate,
> Far, far more abject is thine enemy."

l. 318. *The red-cross flag.* This was the first "Union Jack," formed on April 16, 1606, by the union of the cross of St. George (white ground with a red cross) with the cross of St. Andrew (blue ground with a white diagonal cross). The word "Jack" is connected with *Jacobus, Jacques*, i. e. James I. of England and VI. of Scotland. St. Patrick's cross (white ground with a diagonal red cross) was added in Jan. 1, 1801, when the union of Great Britain and Ireland was effected. Hence the second (and existing) "Union Jack."

l. 323. Wordsworth stayed with W. Calvert (brother of Raisley) in the Isle of Wight in this summer (1793). See note on l. 306.

l. 385. *The illustrious wife of Roland.* Jeanne-Marie-Philipon, Mde. Roland (born March 17, 1754), perished by the guillotine on Nov. 8, 1793. Her *Mémoires* were published in 1794. Her "last words" were : "O Liberté, que de crimes l'on commet en ton nom !"

l. 441. For this passage (as a phase in Wordsworth's personal renaissance), see *Introd.* p. xl.

l. 504. *'That' Robespierre.* Robespierre was born at Arras, May 6, 1758 ; he was elected President of the "Committee of Public Safety," in 1793, and celebrated the "Feast of the Supreme Being," June 8, 1794. He was guillotined with his confederates on July 28 of the same year (1794).

l. 518. *Over the smooth sands.* Wordsworth lived in Cumberland—at Keswick, Whitehaven, and Penrith—from the winter of 1793–94 till the spring of 1795. "He must have made this journey across the Ulverston Sands in the first week of August 1794." (Knight.)

l. 538. *An honoured teacher*; i.e. the Rev. William Taylor, master at Hawkshead Grammar School, 1782-86. He died while Wordsworth was at the school, and was buried in Cartmell Churchyard, June 12, 1786. (See l. 545, "full eight years.")

l. 563. *A Romish chapel.* The remains of an oratory built by the monks of Furness Abbey were at this time in existence.

l. 601. *Vale of Nightshade.* See note on Book II. l. 103.

BOOK XI

l. 1. *From that time*; i.e. July 28, 1794 (the execution of Robespierre).

ll. 11, 12. The punctuation of the first edition is altered by Mr. T. Hutchinson to :—

> ". . . in the People was my trust,
> And in the virtues which mine eyes had seen."

And this is adopted by Prof. Knight. The comma at "And" seems, however, to show that Wordsworth intended the passage to read as it was printed in 1850. *In* = "on the strength of." Conf. "This conviction [*i.e.* of the length of the struggle between France and England] was pressed upon me by having been a witness, during a long residence in revolutionary France, of the spirit which prevailed in that country." (Cited above, note on Book X. l. 306.)

l. 74. *And make an end of Liberty.* See the same note (as above). The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended in view of the sympathy expressed with the Republican principles of which France had now become the embodiment.

ll. 106–145. *O pleasant exercise of hope and joy.* "See Poetical Works, ii. 155—p. 161 of the Edition in One Volume." (Carter's note.) The reference is to "French Revolution, as it appeared to Enthusiasts at its commencement. Reprinted from *The Friend*." (I.e. from the issue of Oct. 26, 1809.) The lines

were composed, as Wordsworth's note tells us, as part of this book of 'The Prelude.'

l. 174. See note on Book X. l. 306.

l. 210. See the same note (as above).

l. 226. See *Introd.* p. xl.

l. 337. *The beloved Sister in whose sight.* Wordsworth renewed his intercourse with Dorothy Wordsworth in the winter of 1794, at Halifax, after a long period of separation.

l. 361. *A Pope is summoned.* Napoleon was proclaimed Hereditary *Empereur des Français*, on May 18, 1804; he was crowned by the Pope on Dec. 2, 1804. He had previously (by the "Concordat" of 1801) re-established the Roman Catholic religion in France.

l. 380. *Where Etna . . . casts his shadow.* Coleridge has left Malta and gone to Sicily. He ascended Etna while he was in that island.

l. 382. *The city of Timoleon.* Timoleon was a genuine example of a constitutional ruler. He was sprung from one of the noblest families of Corinth, the mother-city of Syracuse. After the assassination of Dion, Dionysius the Younger recovered his power; and at the same time the Greek communities in Sicily as a whole were threatened by an invasion of the Carthaginians. In B.C. 344 the Syracusans were in such straits that they sent an embassy to Corinth to request the interference and assistance of their metropolis. Timoleon was chosen by the popular voice to command the expedition, and establish order and security in Sicily. He became master of Syracuse, destroyed the citadel, introduced 10,000 colonists from old Greece assembled at Corinth, and established a democratic constitution under which he served as First Magistrate. He died in B.C. 337. As the result of this movement the "tyrants" were expelled from the other Greek cities in Sicily. See also note to Book IX. l. 411. (Dion.)

l. 405. *A lonely wanderer.* Coleridge. "This last spot of earth, where Freedom," etc., is, of course, England.

l. 423. See 'Paradise Lost,' iv. l. 268.

l. 437. *Empedocles.* The materialist philosopher and poet of Agrigentum, in Sicily : flourished about B.C. 444. He wrote a didactic poem which served as a model for Lucretius' *De Natura.* See Mat. Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna."

l. 438. *Archimedes.* The most famous of ancient mathematicians (born 387 B.C.). He was a native of Syracuse, but he also studied at Alexandria. He applied scientific knowledge to the purposes of human life. He invented the water-screw (pump) in Egypt, and constructed engines of war for Hiero, King of Sicily. He was killed during the capture of Syracuse by the Romans.

l. 440. *And, O Theocritus.* "Theocritus, *Idylls* vii. 78." (Carter's note.)

BOOK XII

l. 151. *And yet I knew a maia ;* not Dorothy, his sister, but Mary Hutchinson.

l. 225. Conf. the ode 'Intimations of Immortality,' etc.

l. 228. *Journeyed towards the hills.* "Either amongst the Lorton Fells, or the north-western slopes of Skiddaw." (Knight.) For the psychological interest of this and the following passage (ll. 288–336), see *Introd.* p. lvii.

l. 288. *One Christmas-time.* Obviously the Christmas holidays in which his father died ; *i. e.* 1783–84.

BOOK XIII

l. 3. *These two attributes.* Conf. 'Observations' prefixed to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads.* "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings : it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity : the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of

contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind."

l. 10. See *Introd.* p. l (Wordsworth's use of Ecstasy); and p. xxxvii, for this book in general.

l. 314. *Of Sarum's Plain.* After Wordsworth's visit to W. Calvert in the Isle of Wight, in the summer of 1793, the two friends went on a walking-tour over Salisbury Plain, where they spent two days.

l. 353. *Some unpremeditated strains.* The reference is to 'Guilt and Sorrow, or Incidents upon Salisbury Plain.' In the advertisement to this poem, Wordsworth explains that "one-third part" of it was published in 1798 ('Female Vagrant'), and that "the whole was written before the close of 1794." It was published as a whole in 1842. See note on Book X. l. 306.

l. 361. *For* then *We were as strangers.* Coleridge read Wordsworth's 'Descriptive Sketches' when he (Coleridge) was at Cambridge. He declared that "seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced."

BOOK XIV

l. 3. *With a youthful friend*; i. e. Robert Jones. See *Introd.* p. xiv.

l. 71. Conf. 'Paradise Lost,' I. l. 21.

l. 120. Conf. 'Paradise Lost,' V. l. 488.

l. 233. *Elsewhere.* See Book XI. l. 337, etc. Also the 'Sparrow's Nest,' for a glimpse of early home life.

> "She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
> And humble cares, and delicate fears;
> A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
> And love, and thought, and joy."

l. 245. *As Milton sings.* In 'Paradise Lost,' IX. l. 490–91.

l. 268. *She came, no more a phantom.* Mary Hutchinson : and conf. 'She was a phantom of Delight.'

l. 311. *To make me capable Of building up a work that shall endure.* See *Introd.* p. xxxii, for the relationship of 'The Prelude' to 'The Excursion' and 'The Recluse.'

l. 356. *The name of Calvert.* Raisley Calvert. See *Introd.* p. xviii. He died in Jan. 1795.

l. 397. *That summer ;* i. e. after the removal of the Wordsworths to Alfoxden in July 1797. Coleridge composed 'The Ancient Mariner' and 'Christabel,' and Wordsworth 'The Idiot Boy' (l. 406) and 'The Thorn' (l. 409). See *Introd.* p. xix.

l. 421. *A private grief.* In Feb. 1805 the *Earl of Abergavenny*, a vessel of the East India Company, went down off Weymouth, and Wordsworth's brother John, who was in "command of the ship," was lost.

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